

THE CENTURY BIBLE HANDBOOKS

***Life and Teaching of
Jesus Christ***

REV. W. B. SELBIE, M. A.



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The life & teaching of Jesus
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THE LIFE AND TEACHING
OF JESUS CHRIST

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✓ BY
W. B. SELBIE, M.A.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS little book makes no claim to an exhaustive treatment of its great subject, nor even to be an original contribution to it. It is intended as an outline or introduction for those who are beginning the study, and who have no special critical or theological knowledge. The aim throughout has been to summarise the results of modern investigation from the constructive standpoint, and to show that when criticism has had its perfect work enough remains for faith and devotion. The subject is one which raises many problems of which no final solution is possible in the present state of our knowledge. The writer would acknowledge his obligations to many modern writers on the period, to some of whom reference is made in these pages, and among them especially to his old teacher, Dr. Sanday of Oxford, to whom all students of the New Testament owe an incalculable debt.

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THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION I

THE SOURCES

To write a life of Jesus Christ is an almost impossible task. We do not possess the necessary materials. The New Testament records are not a "life," but a Gospel. The purpose of the writers was not strictly biographical, but evangelical. They were concerned, not so much with the details of Christ's earthly career as with the interpretation of them—with the moral to be drawn from them. This was all that their circumstances required them to do, and it was sufficient for their immediate purpose. But it is apt to be embarrassing to those whose modern passion for facts leads them to judge of every ancient record by the scientific accuracy of its statements. The science of Biblical criticism has shown us how impossible it is to judge the New Testament writings

from this standpoint, and has at the same time vindicated their claim to give a sufficient and credible account of the facts.

Our materials for the life of Jesus are derived from the four canonical Gospels. Their witness is confirmed by other New Testament writings, but outside of these little or nothing of importance is to be found. The Gospels themselves have for many years been subject to criticism and scrutiny of the most searching kind. This is not over yet, and it may have further and unexpected developments; but at the present moment it is true to say that the Gospels have emerged from the ordeal in a far stronger position than was at one time thought possible, and that their general historicity and credibility have not been shaken, at least in the eyes of those who will approach the whole investigation with an open mind. There is a certain advantage in the fact that the writers were simple, untutored men, who set down their impressions not by any means as trained observers, but rather as believers who wished to convey to others the message they had themselves received. They knew nothing of historical science or of the value of evidence, but their very naïveté enabled them to draw a picture the verisimilitude of which, in its main outlines at least, cannot be questioned.

It is now generally agreed that the earliest of the first three Gospels, commonly called the Synoptics, is that which goes by the name of St. Mark. Both the others are based upon it as their main source, though each of them uses other material drawn from a lost common source, now known as Q—*Quelle*, the German for source. There is no sufficient reason for doubting the tradition that the author of this Gospel was John Mark, the companion of Peter. It may be dated in the period between A.D. 70 and 80, and in the forty years between the death of Jesus and the earlier of these dates there was probably no written Gospel. To that time, however, may be assigned many of the writings of St. Paul, and probably certain fugitive portions of Evangelic narrative, such as the collection of Messianic prophecies in St. Matthew, which are supposed to have formed a document in themselves, written originally in Hebrew. The characteristics of St. Mark's Gospel are familiar to every reader of the New Testament. It bears every sign of being "primitive," in its frank and rapid narrative and its use of uncommon and unconventional expressions. The internal evidence drawn from its style and language makes it very unlikely that the Gospel, as we have it, is a recension of any older literary source. For this reason St. Mark may be regarded as an historical

document of considerable value. This impression is enhanced by detailed study of it, which shows that it gives a consistent and credible account of the appearance and ministry of Jesus Christ, that it fits in with the known social and political history of the time, and that it is more concerned with setting forth the facts in regard to the life and teaching of Jesus, than with forming theories or conclusions with regard to them. It is on such grounds as these that Professor Burkitt, one of the latest and most illuminating writers on the subject, concludes that "In St. Mark we are appreciably nearer to the actual scenes of our Lord's life, to the course of events, than in any other document which tells us of Him, and therefore, if we want to begin at the beginning and reconstruct the portrait of Christ for ourselves, we must start from the Gospel of Mark. The other Gospels, even the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, give us an interpretation of Jesus Christ's life. An interpretation may be helpful, illuminating, even inspired, but it remains an interpretation. The thing that actually occurred was the life which Jesus Christ lived, and our chief authority for the facts of that life is the Gospel according to Mark."¹ Thus

¹ "The Gospel History and its Transmission," by F. Crawford Burkitt, M.A.

a critical examination of this Gospel discovers nothing inconsistent with the ancient saying, quoted by Eusebius from Papias, to the effect that "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, but not in order, whatever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ."

St. Matthew's Gospel stands on a somewhat different footing, and may be described as an interpretation of Jesus rather than a life. It may be dated from A.D. 90 to 100, and it is coloured by the fact that the writer has an aim beyond that of simply setting forth the story of Jesus. The Gospel contains practically the whole of St. Mark, with some few omissions and changes of order, and a considerable number of alterations in style and phrase. These changes are mostly such as would be natural in any attempt to re-write so homely and un-studied a story as that in St. Mark, and everywhere testify to the greater accuracy of the earlier account. The original contribution of St. Matthew to the story of Jesus consists of what is termed a collection of Logia or Sayings. This is generally regarded as an Apostolic record of the teaching of Jesus. It was written at first in Aramaic, may be dated not later than A.D. 70, and is of the utmost value as a record of the teaching of our Lord. In all probability St. Mark had access to a Greek translation of it, or of parts of it, but

it appears in much fuller form in Matthew. The sayings in their original dress were probably preserved in connection with parable or miracle, or as short, detached oracles. In Matthew many of these latter have been pieced together into set discourses. In addition to these there are also peculiar to Matthew the narratives of the Infancy, and the account of the appearances of our Lord after the Resurrection, with certain other minor incidents. These represent tradition at a later stage than we find it in Mark, and bear traces of the tendency to lay stress on the Divine elements in the story of Jesus and to minimise the purely human. Matthew also represents more clearly than Mark the atmosphere and thought of the early Church, especially on its Jewish side. This is seen chiefly in the desire to find a fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy in many of the incidents of the life of Jesus. It is not, however, sufficient to warrant the summary conclusion that all such narratives are merely the creation of the consciousness of the Church, and have no basis in actual history. It may be said, on the other hand, that those portions of Matthew which do not belong either to Mark or the Logia are later, and therefore not of the same historical value as those which are found in the two main sources. They point us to traditions of the Church which were already becoming

fixed, and therefore had, in all probability, history behind them.

One of the chief gains of more recent New Testament criticism has been the success of the attempt to rehabilitate the historicity of Luke. Without accepting all that is claimed for him by Professors Ramsay and Harnack, we may confidently say that the work of St. Luke is that of an expert writer, and one who, so far as his materials allowed him, was a painstaking and accurate historian. We need have no hesitation in assigning the Third Gospel to the companion of St. Paul, "the beloved physician," who was also the compiler of the Acts of the Apostles. A large part of the material for this latter work was found in a diary of his own, written in early life, and known to us as the "We sections" of the book. So far as the Gospel is concerned, St. Luke follows largely the order of Mark, with certain additions and interpolations of his own, *e.g.* the two introductory chapters, and some additions to the appearances of our Lord after the Resurrection, also the passages chap. vii. 20 to chap. viii. 3, and chap. ix. 51 to chap. xviii. 14. From these latter it is assumed that, in addition to Mark and the Logia, St. Luke had before him a third source peculiar to himself, sometimes called the Perean Gospel, and that to this source belong not only the special sections

of his Gospel, but much of the early portion of the Acts of the Apostles. This gives us a third main source for the Synoptic Gospels, and one of great value especially for the teaching of Jesus. The date of Luke may be placed roughly about A.D. 100.

We pass now to the consideration of the Fourth Gospel, which presents an historical and critical problem more complex and difficult even than that of the Synoptics. Opinions are still divided with regard to it, and on some fundamental points the division is complete. The date of the Gospel is probably between A.D. 100 and 110. This would not be incompatible with the traditional authorship by John the Apostle, supposing that he wrote in extreme old age. There is external second-century testimony for this authorship to which some weight has to be attached, and there may be added to it the internal evidence that the writer was a Jew, and was probably connected with a Sadducean or priestly family, that he was well acquainted with Jerusalem, and that he had either first-hand knowledge himself of many of the events which he relates, or had access to sources which possessed such knowledge. He writes also as one to whom the Synoptic Gospels are familiar, and who is in a position to take for granted on the part of his readers a knowledge of certain leading persons and events in the life

of Jesus. On the other hand is to be set the fact that the picture of Jesus and His teaching given in the Fourth Gospel is altogether different from that of the three other Evangelists. Instead of that gradual unfolding of the Messianic consciousness which we find in the Synoptic writers, the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel shows at the outset that He regards Himself as the Son of God and the destined Saviour of the World. The long discourses which the Gospel contains have as their theme not the kingdom of heaven, as in Matthew and Luke, but rather the Person of the Christ Himself, and the various relations in which He stands to His disciples and to the world. At times this teaching is cast in a form which can only come from one who was at least acquainted with that type of Alexandrian speculative philosophy which we find in the writings of Philo. The general impression produced by all this is that we have here the writing of one who was looking back upon the career and teaching of Jesus Christ from a distance, and who was concerned not so much to give a history of events as an explanation of them, and who wrote in order to persuade those who should read his words that Jesus was indeed the Christ, and that a certain conception of His Person, and only one, could be legitimately held by those who called themselves Christians. It is urged by some that all this

is sufficiently explained on the supposition that the Apostle John lived to an extreme old age, and wrote his Gospel with a long experience of the history of the Church behind him, and in view of certain special conditions and difficulties at Ephesus in his own day. Many scholars, on the other hand, consider that the gulf which separates John the beloved disciple from the philosopher and theologian who wrote the Gospel is too wide to be thus easily bridged. The question is still *sub judice*, and will be settled by each student of the Gospel for himself according to his training and predilections.

Important and interesting as this question of authorship is, it does not vitally affect our conception of the Fourth Gospel as a source for the life and teaching of Jesus. Historically the material here is not so valuable as that which we find in the Synoptic writers. But, as has been noted above, there are incidents where the writer betrays a first-hand knowledge which enables us to supplement and even correct the Synoptic narrative with his help. As a whole, however, the Gospel is rather valuable for the evidence it gives of the exalted place which Jesus had come to occupy in the thought of the Christian Church at a very early stage in its history. The idea of His work and Person here put forth, though different from that in the earlier Gospels, is really a

development from it. There is nothing radically incompatible between the two. The roots of the fourth are to be found in the first three. It is important to remember this in studying the discourses, especially where the distinction between the actual words of Jesus and the thought of the writer is not easy to maintain. It must be admitted that, though the thought may be the thought of Jesus, the words are the words of the Evangelist. The presentation of our Lord's character and aims recalls the Pauline Christology, and is most useful for determining the thought of the Church on these great themes. It was because this Gospel satisfied the Church's requirements in this respect that it found its way into the Canon. Professor Burkitt well sums up the whole position as follows: "The Fourth Gospel is the work of one to whom belief in Jesus Christ was not a new external condition impressed upon him from without, after his mind had already acquired its individual characteristics. He had long been conscious, we may be sure, of the presence of the Paraclete within him, guiding him into all truth as to the inner meaning of the life and light which came into the world when the Word of God was manifested, not perhaps without some admixture of ancestral disdain for the materialistic superstition of the masses, both of believers and unbelievers. And now in his old age, when the popular expectations had proved

false, as he knew they would, and the Antichrist that was to come and set up his impious kingdom a little before the end had not, after all, made his appearance, he finds himself confronted by new dangers from the other side. Other thinkers, more spiritual (as they would consider) than he, are saying that the Son of God was not a real man at all, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This to the Evangelist was the greatest error; to deny the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh was the doctrine of Antichrist. The Fourth Gospel is written to prove the reality of Jesus Christ. But the Evangelist was no historian: ideas, not events, were to him the true realities, and if we go to his work to learn the course of events we shall only be disappointed in our search."

There is very little material for the history of Jesus Christ outside the canonical Gospels. References in Pagan historians are scanty in the extreme, and do no more than indicate that such a person as Jesus existed, and was put to death under Pilate. The remaining books of the New Testament throw some light on the teaching of Jesus, but their chief function is to testify to the impressions and opinions regarding Him and His work which were held by His followers in the early Church. The same is true of those fragments of the teaching of Jesus which have been recovered by the archæological

researches of recent years. While it is possible that they may preserve some of the actual sayings of Jesus, their main value is as a monument of the interpretations of His teaching which were regarded as authoritative in certain quarters and at certain times.

The question remains as to the trustworthiness of our sources for the life of Jesus. The earliest of them was not put together in its present form till nearly a generation after the Crucifixion. What guarantee is there that we are not dealing with legend, tradition, and hearsay, rather than with the record of facts? What is there to set against the extreme view of Professor Schmiedel, who holds that the Evangelic records are utterly unhistorical, and that they have preserved for us nothing that is really credible about Jesus Christ save nine fragmentary sayings? Can we go back into those forty years preceding the compilation of St. Mark's Gospel and find anything there that brings us nearer to the facts? The answer to this is that we can. There are traces of earlier documents containing records of the things done and said by Jesus. There is the preaching of the Apostles, which was uniformly reminiscent of the life of Jesus. There is the fact that the Gospels were written in order to preserve and transmit a "deposit" and a "witness" which had already reached fixed proportions and which had carefully to be preserved from the corrup-

tion of alien elements. Further, the fact must not be overlooked that in the Apostolic circle there were special means of keeping alive the "deposit" of the memorials of Jesus Christ. Oral tradition was a thing familiar to the men of Palestine, and the preservation of it had been carried in their schools to a high pitch of perfection. The very contrast between the Synoptic Gospels and the Johannine and Pauline interpretations of Jesus is high testimony to the historicity and verisimilitude of the former. They content themselves with reporting what had been handed down to them. Their business is not to speculate or explain, but to give such evidence as they possess. And they give it with a simplicity, and sometimes even with an absence of understanding, that proves their trustworthiness. Due stress must also be laid on the character of the picture of Jesus drawn by the Evangelists. In spite of the differences between them, there is a fundamental agreement which is most impressive. Nothing could be less like the growth of tradition and imagination than their sane and unadorned narrative. The obvious gaps in it only serve to show that where they knew nothing they said nothing. They reflect the bewilderment which Jesus caused among His contemporaries, and there is the very accent of truth in their record of the development of His Messianic consciousness along lines that were neither welcome nor

intelligible. That they could have invented the teaching of Jesus in the form in which they relate it is frankly incredible. It is much that they should so have recorded it that the only possible comment is, "Nunquam sic locutus est homo."

INTRODUCTION II

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

IN the time of Jesus Christ Palestine was a Roman province, and was broken up into three administrative districts, Judæa and the tetrarchies of Herod Antipas and Philip. Judæa was made up of Judæa proper, Samaria, and Idumæa, and was reckoned as an imperial province of the second class, and was governed by a procurator of equestrian rank. This official was vested with full powers, fiscal, military, and judicial. He was himself responsible for collecting the taxes, part of which were spent on public improvements in the province itself and the remainder remitted to the imperial treasury. Besides these direct taxes large sums were obtained from the people by customs duties. These, however, were farmed out to speculators, who sold the rights of collection. The collectors were the "publicans" of the Gospels, and were exposed to strong temptations to abuse their position by extorting more than their due, and were cordially hated by the common people. The procurator had at his disposal sufficient troops to keep a

firm hand over the populace. These consisted of a few legionaries with a number of mercenaries, chiefly Samaritans. He had the power of life and death, appeal to Rome being only possible in the case of one who had the status of a Roman citizen. All crimes involving capital punishment were in his hands, but minor offences were usually tried in the local courts or in the Great Court (Sanhedrin) at Jerusalem. These courts had considerable powers both of jurisdiction and of administration. However little acceptable the Roman dominance might be to the more patriotic Jews (Zealots and the like), it probably affected the every-day life of the people very little, and certainly involved nothing in the way of oppression. There was complete religious tolerance, and the sanctity of the Temple was respected. This was quite in accordance with the general policy of Rome, and even special favours (*e.g.* the omission of the emperor's head from the copper coinage and the recognition of the Sabbath) seem to have been granted to the Jews on account of their known religious zeal. The Jerusalem Sanhedrin under the Roman rule became a very important body. It had judicial powers throughout Judæa, could arrest, try, and condemn offenders to any punishment except death. It met twice in the week in a building of its own, and was composed of seventy-two members of pure Hebrew blood.

The men of the high-priestly families naturally took the most important place in its councils, and the high priest for the time being was President. The other members were called scribes or elders. The distinction between these two classes strongly corresponds to that between Sadducees and Pharisees.

The tetrarchy of Philip comprised the districts of Batanea, Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Ituræa, but the exact geographical boundaries of it are unknown. The population was mixed, but prevailingly Syrian and Greek. Philip was the best of the sons of Herod, and was a mild and just ruler. Josephus draws a pleasant picture of his visits to the towns of his dominion for judicial purposes. He was a staunch friend to Rome, and aimed at being the Father of his people. He rebuilt the old town of Panias, and gave it the name of Cæsarea Philippi. After his death in A.D. 37 his tetrarchy was given by Caligula to Agrippa, and raised to the dignity of a kingdom.

Herod Antipas was a man of very different stamp. He was a true son of his father, crafty, ambitious, and ostentatious, the very type of an Oriental ruler. His territory embraced Peræa and Galilee, and was split into two parts by the region called Decapolis. Very little is known of Herod's long reign from B.C. 4 to A.D. 39. Josephus confirms the story in the Gospels in regard to his relations with John the Baptist and Jesus. Though

he gives political reasons and the fear of sedition as the ground for his imprisonment and beheading of John, this is not inconsistent with the story that it was John's objection to the marriage with Herodias that first roused the tetrarch's hostility. Galilee of the Gentiles, over which Antipas ruled, was the richest region of Palestine. The upper part is mountainous, but Lower Galilee contains undulating country and fine fertile plains. These were thickly populated, and studded with vineyards and gardens, villages and towns. Its capital in our period was Tiberias, a fine city built by Antipas after the Greek model. Its inhabitants were Gentiles and Jews, the latter predominating, and were a vigorous, brave, and freedom-loving folk. Their moral standard was higher than that in other parts of Palestine, and though mainly farmers and fishermen, they were not without ideals, and had learnt much from contact with Græco-Roman civilisation.

The region called Decapolis was not in any sense a geographical area, but rather a confederation for military and commercial purposes of Græco-Roman cities. Its capital was Scythopolis, and all round it were Pella, Gadara, Hippos, Dium, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Raphana, Kanatha, and for a time Damascus. The sites of most of these towns are still known.¹ Each of them possessed

¹ Cf. G. A. Smith, "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," chap. xxviii.

considerable territory, and was a little state in itself, independent of procurators and tetrarchs alike. These towns, and many others like them throughout Palestine mentioned by Josephus, were Hellenistic in thought, feeling, language, and organisation, and some of them at least became active centres of anti-Semitism in the later troubles.

For any clear understanding of New Testament times it is important to realise how the whole Jewish world was interpenetrated with Hellenistic religion, customs, and ideals. Most Palestinian Jews could speak Greek even if they did not read it, and the Hellenism which made itself felt in architecture, music, commerce, and coinage touched their lives at every point. Ever since the time of the Maccabees, Hellenistic civilisation had impressed its stamp on every department of human activity. In most of the great towns were temples to Greek gods, and public games connected with religious festivals were celebrated. Herod had built a theatre and an amphitheatre even in Jerusalem. We have the mention of stadia, basilica, porticoes, tribunals, banquet-halls, and baths after the Græco-Roman fashion in different towns. In Herod's Temple at Jerusalem the Greek style of architecture was largely followed. The same influence was strongly felt in commerce and the currency, in connection with which most of the names

that have come down to us are Greek, as are also many names for clothing, furniture, and domestic utensils.

This close and constant contact with heathen influences had a twofold effect on the Jewish life of the period. On the one hand it meant a certain liberalising tendency, but on the other it led to a rigid and exclusive form of nationalism. These heathen surroundings made the danger of weakening the Jewish ceremonial law infinitely greater than it would be in a purely Jewish community. In view of such a danger it is not difficult to understand the punctilious insistence of the Pharisees on every jot and tittle of the Law. What to us seems merely an excessive scrupulosity was to them the very condition of maintaining the national life and hope. Among the rank and file of the populace their antagonism to the heathen powers kept alive that expectation and anticipation of the future which we call Messianic. In Judæa and in the priestly circles in Jerusalem this antagonism took a strongly political complexion. Outside Judæa it was perhaps less political but no less real. Throughout the whole country the chief guardians of the Law were the scribes. They developed, systematised, and administered the ordinances of Moses, and taught them in every local synagogue. They were regarded with extraordinary reverence, and obtained a real hold of the popular mind. To them, perhaps, more than to any

other single influence is to be attributed the fact that Judaism did not entirely disappear.

The study of these external conditions of the life of Jesus is important and useful in view of the fact that the historicity of the Gospels is still roundly denied by some scholars. Men like J. M. Robertson in this country, and Kalthoff of Bremen, and others, seek to explain away the whole historical foundation of Christianity, and resolve the story of Jesus into a mere collection of myths. But the Gospels are too deeply rooted in contemporary history to give such an attempt the least chance of success, except with those who allow their prejudices to blind them to the facts. The Gospels are open to criticism, as are all ancient documents, and must be judged by the canons applied to all contemporary literature. They do not need to fear any such tests, which, though they may modify some of our preconceptions regarding them, cannot destroy their local colouring or their historical background. The more closely they are studied in relation to the period of which they speak and the period at which they were composed, the more impossible does it become to regard them as productions of the imagination. The foundation of fact on which they are built cannot be concealed.

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH, BOYHOOD, AND EDUCATION OF JESUS

THE story of the Nativity is not found in the earliest record of the life of Jesus Christ. St. Mark's Gospel knows nothing of it, it is not mentioned by St. Paul, and even the Fourth Gospel, which insists strongly on the Divine origin and pre-existence of Jesus, makes no allusion to it. The two accounts given in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke do not agree in all particulars and present some very remarkable features. The genealogies trace the descent of Jesus through Joseph and not through Mary. But both accounts represent Jesus as born of a Virgin, and born according to promise, though in the one case the promise is made to Joseph and in the other to Mary. Attempts to harmonise these discrepancies are altogether useless. The situation is best understood by considering the way in which the stories arose, and the circumstances which gave rise to them.

There can be no doubt that, through the whole of His public career, Jesus was regarded as the son of Joseph and Mary. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "Is not this Jesus, whose father and mother we know?" St. Luke speaks more than once of "His parents," and makes His mother say, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."¹ A very little reflection will show that no other view was possible to the contemporaries of Jesus. At the same time it is evident that within the circle of the Holy Family there was a consciousness of mystery surrounding Jesus, and of a mystery that had to do with His birth. We are told that His mother "kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart" (Luke ii. 19, 51), and she had reason for doing so. It must have been from her in the first instance that the true story of the birth of Jesus came; and Professor Ramsay is probably right in assuming that St. Luke's account of the Nativity was obtained from Mary herself. As he says, "There is a womanly spirit in the whole narrative, which seems inconsistent with the transmission from man to man, and which, moreover, is an indication of Luke's character; he had a marked sympathy with women." St. Matthew's account represents more strictly the man's point of view, and is, no doubt, that which was more generally current among

¹ Cf. Matt. xii. 23; Mark iii. 21, 32, xii. 35; John i. 13.

the friends and contemporaries of Jesus. It must be remembered that the great problem of the life of Jesus Christ is the fact that the men who consorted with Him during His days on earth came to so sure and strong a belief in His Divine nature and power, and that this belief took so firm a hold in the very earliest days of the Christian Church. To these men the fact that Jesus should have come into the world in a fashion different from that of the ordinary children of men, was a natural and even necessary thing. Their account of it is altogether higher than those of other theogonies. There is a reticence, and so a verisimilitude, about it which these do not possess. And, to-day, belief in the Virgin Birth, while it may not be necessary to belief in the Divinity of Christ, is to many a natural concomitant of this latter belief—a lesser wonder covered by the greater. It is from this standpoint that the world still gathers in awe round the cradle in the stable at Bethlehem, and still listens with adoration to the angels' song.

It is needless to do more than summarise the well-known narrative. Jesus came in the fulness of the times, and there were hints and anticipations of His coming. Zacharias and Elizabeth, Anna and Simeon, were but types of the devout souls who looked for the consolation of Israel. It is true that hope often

becomes the father of events and shapes them to its own liking. But there was little scope for that here. Indeed, one marvels at the insight and penetration which could discover the Divine purpose in such unpromising surroundings. Simple folk like Joseph and Mary may well have been bewildered by what happened to them ; and it is safe to say that the birth in Bethlehem, the visit of the wise men, the testimony of the shepherds, the wrath of Herod, and the flight into Egypt, all became more significant in retrospect. The Evangelic records abound in suggestions that even those who were nearest to Jesus failed to understand Him during His lifetime, and were quite unable even to take Him at His own valuation. To them the proof of His Divine claims was cumulative, and the wonders of the childhood of Jesus were only appreciated by those who looked back upon them in the light of His maturer years. The impelling motive in all these stories is, as Neumann says, "the idea that there was in Jesus's character, so far as we can rediscover it, an underivable element which throws us back upon God—the great original element of religious genius. In this sense the cradle of the child who to-day is claimed as belonging to the whole world, was overshadowed by God."

Of the boyhood of Jesus we know very little, and no attempts to pierce the haze that surrounds His earlier

years can be very successful. What little is told us in the Gospels stands in vivid contrast to those apocryphal stories found in writings outside the New Testament. Those who believe that there is a large legendary element in the Gospels themselves, have always to settle the problem presented by the contrast between the Gospel narratives and those other, later, and obviously legendary accounts of Jesus. In the one case are to be found the wildest and most fantastic imaginings; in the other a simple, reticent, straightforward tale.¹ That Jesus grew and waxed strong, that the grace of God was upon Him, and that He increased in favour with God and men (Luke ii. 40, 52), sums up all that we know of His early years. That He met with the doctors in the Temple, and astonished them with His wisdom, and felt Himself some foretaste of His future work in doing so, is a natural enough episode, and one that we most probably owe to the fond pride of the mother who "kept all these sayings in her heart." It is possible, however, to do something to fill in the bare outlines of the New Testament narrative. There is a legitimate function for the historical imagination, and in the physical surroundings of His home, and in the general

¹ The fact that some length of time separates the two classes of narrative is all in favour of the historicity of the Gospels. Legends take time to grow.

conditions of Jewish life in His time, much may be found that throws light on the early years of Jesus. No careful student of His teaching can be blind to the fact that He had lived with eyes wide open to the various influences of His day. He could meet the scribes on their own ground and speak to them in their own tongue, but He was equally at home with the common people. He had shared their experiences, and they "heard Him gladly." Nor can we doubt that His soul was keenly sensitive to those physical influences which play so large a part in moulding thought and character. The Galilee in which Jesus was brought up was a fair and fertile land—a very garden for beauty and delight. But it was populous too, full of cities and villages, so that wherever one journeyed it was easy to gather a crowd. And every place in it was instinct with historical associations. Nazareth, where the boyhood of Jesus was spent, in spite of its evil name among the people of Galilee, was a lovely spot. With its white limestone houses nestling amid the vine-clad hills, it has been aptly compared to a jewel in its setting. From those hills was visible a scene, which to every Jew suggested stirring memories of undying hopes. A modern scholar and traveller describes it thus: "Before us lay the great plain of Megiddo, and opposite us, from

the southern edge of the plain, rose the mountain-land of Central Palestine. Away to the right we saw Mount Carmel closing the valley on the west and dividing it from the plain of Sharon. On the left the eastern view was closed and the plain was narrowed by Mount Tabor, Mount Moreh (round whose slopes lay Nain, Endor, Shunem, and Jezreel), and Mount Gilboa. Nowhere, not even from the summit of the Mount of Olives, with Jerusalem before and the Dead Sea behind, has the historian or the philosophic thinker a more inspiring and impressive view than that from the brow south of Nazareth.”¹ The valley of Megiddo was one of the natural highways of Palestine, the great road from the coast eastward. There, close by Nazareth, Jesus as a boy must have “watched the Roman travellers, merchants, messengers, soldiers, officials, going east and returning west. He heard much about the glory and power of the great empire, the oppressor of the Hebrews, which kept its garrison even in the Holy City, and made the high priests of Jerusalem its slaves. Nazareth was to Him like a hermitage beside a great centre of life. He could pass in a few moments from the quiet seclusion of His home into full view of the busy world, and then retire again to peace.”² To these impressions must be

¹ Sir W. M. Ramsay, “The Education of Christ,” p. 49. ² *Ib.* p. 53.

added those which would be obtained from the annual journeys to Jerusalem. There Jesus was brought into contact with the life of the Temple and the schools, and the Gospels contain many suggestions as to His intimate familiarity with these things and with the surroundings of the city itself.

The education of Jesus would be that of an ordinary Jewish boy of His time. As Joseph and Mary were devout people, it would be begun in the home with that scrupulous care which the Law enjoined. At six or seven years of age Jesus was sent to the "house of the book," the elementary school attached to the synagogue. There He learnt to read (Luke iv. 16) and to write (John viii. 8). There too, and in the synagogue itself, He would be instructed in the Law, and become familiar with the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—practically our Old Testament. At twelve or thirteen years of age Jesus became a "son of the Law," and from that time onwards the synagogue became more and more a familiar place to Him. There first, in all probability, He shared its services by reading the Scripture appointed for the day, and Luke iv. 16, 17 implies that it was His habit so to do. It is probable that Jesus was not one of those Jewish boys who entered a Rabbinical school or college with the view of becoming a teacher of the Law. The one distinguishing

feature of His ministry was that He taught not as do the scribes. He had had no training in their methods, and He was in no sense one of themselves. Every well brought up boy among the Jews was taught a trade, and Jesus followed that of Joseph, and became a carpenter and builder. It was mainly in this work that the years of His young manhood were spent, and it is in vain that we try to penetrate their secret. Dogmatic conclusions here are especially to be avoided. All that we can gather from the Gospel narratives goes to show that the manhood of Jesus Christ developed along genuinely human lines. He grew in wisdom and in stature as do other men. That there was in Him something greater than our ordinary human nature is not to be denied. But this did not lift Him out of the human category. Indeed, His greatness appears in the use He makes of ordinary human experiences, and in His adaptation of Himself to ordinary human conditions. No doubt we are safe in arguing that the habits of His earlier life followed Him into His maturer years. When we first read of His going up into the mountain by night to pray, we need not conclude that this was the first time He had ever done anything of the kind. The attempts which are sometimes made by theologians to penetrate what is called the self-consciousness of Jesus can never be very successful, save as they follow strictly the line

of His own thought and teaching. But we shall not go far wrong if we believe that in those silent years prayer and communion with His Father formed the regular discipline of His soul, and prepared Him for that work which He had come into the world to do.

The training of Jesus was thus a fit preparation for His ministry. Granted that He had an unique power of using the opportunities presented to Him, those opportunities were just such as the special character of His work required. In recognising the world-wide scope of the work and teaching of our Lord, and its curious adaptability to humanity as such, we must never lose sight of the strictly limited conditions under which that work was done, and of the equally limited forms under which the teaching was presented to the world. Jesus was a man of His time first, that He might become the man for all time. He knew His own people, their life, their learning, their occupations, their needs, their sins, and they became in His hands types of humanity at large. His early surroundings were those of the cheerful every-day life of His time. There was no trace of asceticism, in the sense of alienation from the world, in His upbringing, just as there is no trace of it in His spirit in maturer years. He was a man of the people. He loved His folk, and He shared their busy life and simple occupations. But He had a soul above them, and saw a

meaning in it all that His contemporaries could not see. His love of nature, and the simple and beautiful expression which He gives to it in His later teaching, marks Him out at once as having a certain originality in His point of view, and this is characteristic of His whole outlook upon things.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY

THE ministry of Jesus Christ began with His Baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, and with His Temptation in the wilderness. At His baptism He showed Himself conscious of the fact that He had come into the world to fulfil a great mission, and in His temptation He recognised that the work was to be done not after any human plans but in strict accordance with the will of God. These two experiences are very closely allied, and may be reckoned as the definite setting apart of Jesus to His life's work.

John the Baptist was the last of the prophets (Matt. xi. 9), and in many respects he recalls the work and teaching of such great names in Hebrew history as Elijah, Amos, and Isaiah. Indeed, he seems definitely to have modelled himself upon the first-named of these. The fierce, shaggy aspect of the man, his clothing of skins, and his ascetic fare of locusts and wild honey, all go to suggest the prophet of Horeb. But the Baptist was no

mere imitator. He had his own work to do, and it was a work strictly conditioned by the circumstances of his time. Recent investigation has shown that the time was ripe for something like a religious revival in Israel. The Roman yoke pressed heavily upon the nation, and the hope of the kingdom of God was in every heart. That this hope was often cast in the form of a narrow nationalism cannot be denied, and both John the Baptist and Jesus after him used it only that it might be corrected and purified in their hands. John was strictly the forerunner of Jesus in that he gave to this spirit of expectation an ethical turn. He preached "a baptism of repentance for remission of sins" (Mark i. 4). To him the vision of the kingdom meant that a great religious crisis was at hand, and in preparation for it he required humiliation and repentance from the nation and from individuals alike. He recalled the half-forgotten spirit of the ancient prophets, and in stinging words lashed the vices of his time and called men to a new and better life. The scene of his ministry was the wilderness of Judæa, near where the Jordan falls into the Dead Sea. Great crowds of people, among whom all classes were represented, gathered to hear him. They were stirred by his words as are the leaves of the forest by the wind, and when he proposed to follow up his preaching by the symbolic rite of baptism they came ready to his hand.

The act of baptism was analogous to the ceremonial washings so familiar among the Jews, though it differed from these in being supposed to be final in its effect. As men and women plunged into the waters of Jordan and were raised out again, they were held to have been cleansed from their evil past and pledged to a better life. But both the baptism and teaching of John were regarded as only preparatory to something greater, according to the Gospel writers. The Baptist conceived himself to be a forerunner, and pointed men to another teacher and another mission that should supersede his own. As time went on this presentiment seems to have become stronger, and when one day Jesus presented Himself among the crowd of those waiting to be baptized, John recognised in Him the one who was to come.

That Jesus should have submitted Himself to the baptism of John is a fact that seems to require explanation. It would appear that John himself showed some hesitation in the matter (Matt. iii. 14). Probably he had some prior knowledge of Jesus, and it may be that he felt, as many have felt since, that He was not a fit subject for a baptism of repentance. But it may be urged, on the other hand, that in thus identifying Himself with the common crowd Jesus was really and effectually inaugurating His ministry. Nowhere do His full humanity, and His deep sympathy with human needs,

appear more strikingly than when He went down into the waters of Jordan with the Baptist's penitents. This act of voluntary humiliation became the sign of His ministry, and is the beginning of that sharing of our human experiences which gives to Jesus His right to lead men and to speak in their name. It was confirmed by what is called the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, and by the voice which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." From this time forward Jesus spoke and acted as one who had a mission to accomplish.

Immediately after His baptism Jesus was "led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Under some Divine inner compulsion (Mark i. 12) He retired from the face of man, and held communion with Himself as to His life's work. Something of what happened in those days of prayer and striving, we know from the stories of the Temptation in the Gospels. These stories must have come from Jesus Himself, and they throw a clearer light on the mystery of His inner consciousness than perhaps any other incident in His career. The form in which the narratives are cast is frankly parabolical. It was only through symbols and in pictures that the struggle of those days could be made real to other men. The struggle itself, we may be sure, was fought out on the battle-ground of the soul. And it was a real struggle, no dream or phantom of the night.

The Temptation of Jesus can never be explained by being explained away. "He was tempted like as we are," and in that fact is to be found His power to help us when we too are tempted. He was without sin, but His sinlessness was not that of the child whose innocence hardly knows what it is to be tempted, but that of the grown man, the strong warrior, who has fought and conquered in many a pitched battle. The *non posse peccare* of the ancients is a poor thing beside the *posse non peccare*. And it is this latter that describes the position of Jesus. It is not that He was unable to sin but that He was able not to sin. The conflict we call the Temptation showed how great His power was, and sealed His victory.

The story of the Temptation is too familiar to need a detailed exposition. If it may be taken to represent Christ's own view as to the methods of His future work and of the ideals which should dominate Him, then we to-day are much more concerned with the spiritual interpretation of the story than with its details or its dramatic form. It has often been pointed out that the conflict was really a conflict of ideals. There is no question here of sin in its grosser forms. The battle was fought out on the plane, not of the physical, but of the spiritual world. Thus, in the first temptation, to turn stones into bread, Jesus is met with the

suggestion that He should use His powers to satisfy purely personal needs. The same temptation presented itself to Him once and again during His ministry, as when He was urged to call down fire from heaven, to save Himself from the Cross, or to perform miracles for personal and inadequate ends. The answer of Jesus, that man "does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," lays down a principle of self-denial and of subservience to the Divine ends which became the guiding principle of His career. He realised that the path marked out for Him was one which led not to self-gratification but to self-sacrifice, and it would thus have been contrary to the whole spirit of His life to employ His power in order to help Himself. The way in which Jesus used His mysterious gifts is quite as remarkable as the gifts themselves. There was a restraint about it which argues a singular force of character, and a clear understanding of the situation involved.

The method of the second temptation is closely allied to that of the first. Our Lord is bidden to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, that the angels may bear Him up in their hands, and all the world see how He enjoys the favour and protection of God. In answering, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," Jesus showed that He was not

to be regarded as a favourite of heaven, who was exempted from the ordinary rules of every-day human life. His trust in God was to be equal to every emergency of life, and was to be justified, not in being allowed to escape from perils, but in suffering. Here, again, the conflict is between the two wills, the human and the Divine. The aim of Jesus was to do the will of Him that sent Him, therefore He was not anxious about His own safety, and still less anxious to demonstrate to all and sundry that underneath Him were the everlasting arms. His dependence on God did not bring Him any protection that was not granted to other men. As Dr. Fairbairn says, "There was to be for Him no special intervention, no exclusive providence, nothing that marked Him as the solitary care and single love of Heaven. He was to take His place in the ranks of men, live as they lived, under the same conditions, sons of one Father, brothers in dependence on God as on Nature, and if He did a greater work than any other, He was still to do it, not as made of God independent of law, but as, like man, bound to all obedience."¹

The third temptation offers to Jesus the kingdoms of this world if He will promise allegiance to the prince of this world. It springs out of the previous

¹ "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 351.

trials, and makes a more subtle and more terrible appeal than they. It is not now His personal position that is in question, but the success of His life's work. Will He make a compromise with evil for the sake of securing the triumph of His aims? Resistance to this temptation meant a fixed determination to do God's work in God's own way, and to pay the cost. The keen moral sense of Jesus rejected the possibility of any lowering of His ideal or of any compromise with evil. The way of the world was not to be His way. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

The temptations, taken as a whole, give us the clue both to the character of Christ's personality and to the nature of His mission on the earth. The life He lives among men is to be a really human life, subject to the ordinary limitations of our lot. That He has a power greater than that of other men goes without saying, but He will not use this power for any purposes of show, or to protect or aggrandise Himself. He holds it simply at the service of those who need, and in order the better to fulfil His mission of beneficence and redemption. So far as He Himself is concerned, He lives in unquestioning submission to the will of His Father. The principle here laid down will be found to be of the greatest importance when we come to

discuss the miracles of Jesus, and His death upon the Cross. The Temptation shows Him laying down, as it were, the programme for His future work, and He "set His face steadfastly" to follow it throughout.

For the events immediately succeeding the Baptism and Temptation, the narrative of the Synoptic Gospels needs to be supplemented by that of St. John. According to the now generally accepted chronology,¹ these events took place in the winter of A.D. 26. The home of Jesus was still at Nazareth, and after the solemn inauguration of His work He set out from Judæa to return thither. He was accompanied by His family, and possibly by some of John's disciples, who had been attracted to Him through the incidents at the Baptism, and who began to share the expectations of the Baptist in regard to Him. At any rate, it was on the return journey through Galilee, and afterwards at the first Passover in Jerusalem, that Jesus began to gather round Him the band of men who formed His disciples. On the way to Nazareth Jesus and His friends stayed at a little town called Cana, and it was there that the first of His "signs" was accomplished (John ii. 1-11). The attendance of Jesus at the marriage feast, and His turning of the water into wine,

¹ See the article on "Chronology of the New Testament" in Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible."

are not without significance for the interpretation of His ministry. It is no doubt because of this meaning to be attached to it that the event is recorded by the writer of the Fourth Gospel. The scene is in almost violent contrast to that of the preaching of the Baptist. John was an ascetic, and amid the joy and plenty of the feast Jesus first showed that spirit which afterwards was to condemn Him in the eyes of some as "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber." The real moral of the incident, however, is to emphasise His full and beautiful humanity, and His identification of Himself with our common life and its needs. From Nain Jesus went on to Capernaum (John ii. 12), and after a brief stay there returned with some of His disciples to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was during this Passover, according to the writer of the Fourth Gospel, that Jesus expelled the buyers and sellers from the outer court of the Temple. The Synoptic writers describe a similar act as having taken place early in the last week of the ministry. It is just possible that Jesus repeated it, though the act is certainly more appropriate at the beginning of His public work, as an expression of His claims, and as a commencement of that cleansing process foreshadowed in the baptism of John. Some overt act of the kind seems to be needed in order to account for the public notice which now

began to be taken of His work. In this and in other respects the Johannine narrative well fills the gaps left in the other Gospels, and taken along with them gives a coherent picture of events in this early period.

It was about this time also that the fortunes of Jesus and the whole outlook of His mission were profoundly affected by the arrest of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas. The son of Herod the Great, Antipas had inherited from his father the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea. He was a fairly successful administrator, and skilled in diplomacy of the more cunning type. His arrest of the Baptist was a purely political measure of precaution against a seditious person and a possible menace to the Roman power. John was thrown into the fortress Machærus, and there remained a prisoner for many months. This action on the part of the authorities was a warning to Jesus of the trouble that might be expected, and He at once retired into Galilee. On His way "He must needs pass through Samaria," and St. John's moving and beautiful story of the interview with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and of the events which followed from it, serves to show the way in which His mission shaped itself before the mind of Jesus, and the difficulty He experienced in making it known both to His disciples and to the populace (John iv.). On the return to Galilee Jesus remained in

comparative privacy, and the disciples seem to have returned to their ordinary occupations. But their Master could not altogether be hidden. The news of events in Jerusalem had preceded Him, and as He was stirred by compassion to perform certain works of healing, men's minds began to be occupied with Him and His doings, and the time became ripe for greater things.

There is no doubt that the execution of the Baptist proved a turning-point in the career of Jesus. Some modern writers contend that Jesus really became John's successor, and did not begin His mission until this moment. Without going so far as this, we may well believe that the death of the forerunner served to put an end to the probationary period of the ministry, and acted as a call to new and wider activities. From this time forth it became more and more evident that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

CHAPTER III

THE CALL AND COMMISSION OF THE TWELVE

IN gathering round Him twelve men that they might receive His teaching and carry on His work, Jesus was acting in accordance with the custom of His time. The Rabbi and his school of followers was a familiar figure throughout Palestine. But it was only in externals that Jesus resembled him. The relationship between Him and His followers, and the effect that He produced both upon them and by their means, were quite unlike anything that had been known in the Rabbinical schools. There is no doubt that the method of Jesus was deliberate. It was not His purpose to found a Church, or establish an organisation, but rather to call men to Himself and mould them after His own pattern. They were to become the living vehicles of His truth and the witnesses to His power. In stamping them with His own image Jesus left behind Him a ceremonial more lasting than any institution. The relation

between Jesus and His disciples is most interesting and instructive. They were His intimates during the time of His ministry, and much of His teaching was meant solely for their ears. But it was only by slow degrees that they were brought to an understanding of their Master's message, and the Gospels are singularly candid in recording their misapprehension of the real situation, and even their unbelief. This is not surprising when it is remembered that the men themselves were men of the people, and had had no special literary or spiritual training. Some of them at least had been disciples of John the Baptist, and were "looking for the consolation of Israel"; and it is safe to conjecture that there must have been about all of them some signs of fitness for the work in hand before they received their call. The common element about them seems to have been a readiness to receive new impressions and an absence of that formalism which was so marked a characteristic of the religious life of their age. In other respects their culture and mental attitude were those of their contemporaries. The connection of these men with Jesus was established only by degrees. As has already been indicated, some of them attached themselves to Him as the result of John the Baptist's teaching, and remained in a more or less loose adherence during the early days of the

ministry. But there came a time when it was necessary to make this connection a more formal and definite thing. A special arrangement was entered into with the Twelve. They were to be with Jesus; they were to be sent out to preach in His name; and they were to receive power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils (Mark iii. 14).

It was thus by a gradual process of selection that the little company was formed. First of them came the two brothers—Simon, surnamed Peter, and Andrew—and the sons of Zebedee, James and John. These four seem to have enjoyed a peculiar degree of intimacy with Jesus. Peter was the frequent spokesman of the band. A strong, passionate, impulsive soul, he had the defects of his qualities. Though he sinned greatly he loved much, and the power of our Lord's personality is seen in the way in which He bound this child of nature to Himself, and caused him to grow in grace until he became the life and soul of the early Church. Of the first four, and indeed of the whole twelve, John was the intellectual leader. He first began to understand the work and teaching of Jesus, and between him and the Master, who was also his cousin according to the flesh, there sprang up a very close and beautiful intimacy. Of Andrew and James very little is known. Both, it appears, suffered a martyr's death—Andrew at

Patræ in Achaia, and James at the hands of Herod Agrippa (Acts xii. 2). Next in order among the Twelve come Philip and Bartholomew. The latter is usually identified with Nathaniel of Cana, "an Israelite without guile," Bar Talmi being his patronymic. Philip was of Bethsaida—a slow, dull man, who, according to the tradition, was charged with the work of catering for the temporal needs of the band. Thomas and Matthew come next, both remarkable men. Thomas was a doubting soul, but for that very reason all the more conspicuous in his absolute devotion to the Master. Matthew, or Levi, belonged to the despised class of publicans, and his call to discipleship was a practical manifesto on the part of Jesus. His book, the Logia or Sayings of Jesus, became the basis of our First Gospel. James the son of Alphæus, also called James the Little, is the next in the band, and tradition says that he also had been a tax-gatherer, the friend and companion of Levi. Then comes one who is variously called Lebbæus, Thaddæus, or Judas the son of James. Last on the list are Simon the Cananæan, a Zealot, a member of a party that was pledged to undying enmity against the Roman Government, and Judas of Kerioth in Judæa, who became treasurer of the band, and ultimately sold his Master to the priests for thirty pieces of silver.

It was with these men that Jesus began the work of His ministry and laid the foundations of the kingdom. To them He first opened "the mystery of the kingdom," and then sent them forth to preach and act in His name. Much of the teaching of Jesus was intended for the ears of the disciples in the first instance, though afterwards they were to become witnesses of it to the world. Thus, while He spake to the crowd in parables, the explanation of the parables was given only to this inner circle. But even the disciples were slow of heart to believe, and the soil of their minds needed much preparation before it was ready to receive the seed of the kingdom. They all had their traditional preconceptions as to the nature of the kingdom of heaven, and were by no means ready for the purely spiritual tone of the teaching of Jesus on the subject. It was for this reason, probably, that so many of the more private discourses of their Master dwelt on the prospects of the persecution that awaited them, and on the blessings that belonged to the poor and the meek. They were not to be led astray by the first enthusiasms of the crowd, but were to keep in mind that their destiny was to be hated of all men for the Son of man's sake. Parable after parable bids them recognise the slow, secret, and silent way in which alone God's kingdom can come, and helps to disabuse their minds of those facile notions as to place and

power by which they were too easily occupied. They are constantly warned against judging of their work and of the life of the kingdom by external signs. It is the inner motive and conscience that determine everything, and by the word of God only that men live. So the disciples are sent forth as Apostles into the world, relying only on the help which comes from the Spirit of God. They have to work the works of their Master and testify for Him to a crooked and perverse generation, and they have to do it all dependent only on the unseen. Without money or changes of raiment they are to go forth, bearing the Lord's burden, turning their cheeks to the smiter and facing the harshness of the world, with no other assurance than that of the presence of spiritual help with those that need and seek it. They are to seek, in utter self-forgetfulness, the glory of God and His kingdom and the salvation of men. The programme of their mission as Jesus sketches it is truly amazing, and it may be questioned whether any of the disciples realised it in its entirety until after the Resurrection. It is always useful to remember that in the Gospels we have unconsciously the reflections of these men themselves in the light of experience. It is well, too, that in studying the commission of Jesus we should bear in mind the manner in which afterwards it was carried out. Some of the narratives in the Acts of the

Apostles form the best possible commentary on the words of Jesus in the Gospels as to the work which His Apostles were called upon to do, and reveal in quite an unmistakable fashion the impression which Jesus had made upon them.

Any account of the instruction which Jesus gave to the disciples would require a recapitulation of the whole of His public teaching. They were present when "He taught the multitudes," but they had also the advantage of hearing certain private explanations of the more public teaching. Among the discourses intended primarily for their ears, are generally reckoned parts of the Sermon on the Mount and of the address on the great mission (Matt. x. 5-14), the apocalyptic address in Matt. xxiv. and xxv., and the discourse in the upper room at the time of the betrayal (John xiv.-xvi.). Of certain special incidents in the life of their Master the Twelve or certain individuals among them were the only witnesses, and these, too, must be reckoned among the lessons which they were intended to learn. Such were the raising of Jairus' daughter, the walking on the sea, the transfiguration, the cursing of the barren fig-tree, the foot-washing in the upper room, and the miraculous draught of fishes. In addition to all this, however, very much of the general teaching of Jesus bears on the nature of the discipleship of which the

members of this little band were to be the first examples and exponents. Their relations with Jesus Christ and His mission were to be reproduced in countless others who had not known Him "after the flesh." To these He is leader and guide, the way to the Father, the example and inspiration of life. They become, through their relation of obedience and likeness to Him, a community fenced off from the world, bearing its burdens but not sharing its spirit. The object of their discipline is that they, too, may take up the cross and deny themselves for the sake of others. Thus they become the "salt of the earth," "the light of the world," the leaven which "leaveneth the whole lump." The charge laid upon them, when their training is complete, is that they shall go forth in the name of their Master and in His strength, making disciples of all nations and baptizing them into the Name. In this vast undertaking His Presence is to go with them unto the end, and from Him they will derive the power and inspiration needed for their great task.

Thus for the student of the life of Jesus His call and training of the Twelve are all important. We have here, in epitome, His whole programme, and it enables us to realise, as perhaps nothing else does, the breadth of His outlook and the world-wide scope of His vision. This thing was not done in a corner. Behind and

throughout it all is manifest a purpose which is nothing less than the world-wide mission for the uplifting of men. Even the terms of the Messianic kingdom are too narrow to include it all. Jesus reads His own interpretation into the familiar Jewish forms, and works on principles which are moral and spiritual rather than ecclesiastical. The effect which He produced upon the men who were His intimates was profound and lasting. By the quiet influence of His Personality He won their free assent to His claims and sent them out to bear witness to the world. He changed their character and moral conceptions first, that through them He might appeal to the wider circle. This is the chosen method of Jesus. Not by the exertion of any authority or by the open manifestation of power, but through the leavening influence of character and personality does He make His truth known. It is this which constitutes the universality of His message and gives the most permanent guarantee to His word.

Amongst the first disciples of Jesus was a little band of women who must not pass without mention. That they should have found so large a place in the records of the ministry is very significant. Their presence throws not a little light on the tone and scope of the ministry of Jesus. Some of these women were relatives of the men disciples, and they cared for the simple domestic

needs of the band. Among them were Mary of Magdala, who had been cured by Jesus of some mental or nervous complaint ("out of whom He cast seven devils"), and Joanna the wife of Chusa the steward of Herod Antipas, one Susanna, and the household at Bethany. After the death of Jesus His own mother seems to have joined these women disciples. She, with others of them, was present at the Crucifixion, and these remained faithful when the other disciples had fled. Their devotion to the Master was very real, and there is no doubt that they played a large part in the ministrations of the early Church. It was from the ranks of such women as these that the first deaconesses were chosen and ministered to the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. In the spread of early Christianity their influence was very considerable, and they were instrumental in finding an entrance for the new religion into the homes of both Jews and Romans of the better class. Considering the very great share which women have had in the work of the Christian Church from the beginning, and the influence of Christianity on the status and estimate of their sex, it is interesting to be able to trace the beginnings of it all to the example and teaching of Jesus Himself.

The question has been raised in modern times as to whether Jesus and His disciples can be said to have belonged to any of the religious sects which were common

in Palestine at the beginning of the Christian era. In particular it has been urged that His teaching and that of John the Baptist have special affinities with that of the Essenes.¹ These were a Jewish sect closely related to the Pharisees, of whom Josephus says that there were at least 4000 in and around Jerusalem. They were a simple agricultural people, who lived as celibates and had all things in common. They were characterised by a scrupulous cleanliness, had no slaves, dressed in white, and prohibited the use of oaths. They were rigid in their observance of the Sabbath, but were excluded from the Temple worship because of their abhorrence of animal sacrifice, and their habit of making a daily prayer to the sun. There is no evidence whatever that Jesus or His disciples had any connection with them, nor is there to be found any real trace of their influence in early Christian teaching or practice.

¹ For further information about this curious order *cf.* Schürer's "History of the Jewish People," and Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIRACLES

WE have now reached a point in the ministry of Jesus when it becomes necessary to treat certain outstanding features of it by themselves and apart from any chronological sequence. For the contemporaries of Jesus His teaching and His miracles provided at once the great attraction and the great stumbling-block. "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" By the modern world His teaching is accepted with increasing reverence and assent, while His miracles are viewed with suspicion as a hindrance rather than a help to the faith. They present a problem which deserves to be discussed with the utmost candour and with entire freedom from prejudice.

Great changes have taken place since Mr. Matthew Arnold dismissed the whole subject with the airy dictum, "Miracles do not happen." Such a confident and question-begging denial is not now possible to any

careful student of the subject, and argues a prejudice of which it must be our first business to rid ourselves if we are to take a scientific view of the situation. We must accept Huxley's dictum, that "no conceivable event, however extraordinary, is impossible." Even among scholars who are by no means conservative there is now a strong tendency to recede from the extreme sceptical position and to view the whole situation with an open mind. The reasons for this are partly historical and partly psychological. It can no longer be assumed that the miraculous element is a late accretion in the Gospel narrative, and arises out of the myth-making tendency at work among the Evangelists. Critical investigation has shown that the miracles are an essential part of the Gospels in their very earliest form, so far, at least, as that form is recoverable, and cannot be separated from them without destroying them altogether. On the other hand, modern psychology is opening up the whole subject in a variety of ways, and making it less and less possible to take the standpoint of a dogmatic materialism. It is true that we can no longer regard the miracles as an apologetic asset. No one now tries to prove the truth of Christianity by means of them after the fashion of Paley. Their evidential value is no longer regarded as their supreme merit. They have to be accounted for

and explained. We no longer see in them a glorification of the Person of Christ and evidence for His divinity. We begin with the Person, and we see in them that feature of His life and work which most challenges criticism and makes the largest demands on faith. It is both true and pertinent to say that the supreme miracle of the New Testament is Jesus Christ Himself. He represents a moral and spiritual problem that as much requires explanation as do any of the wonderful works attributed to Him. Granted that He was what He claimed to be and some such works follow almost as a matter of course. Knowing what we do of the power of personality in ordinary experience it is hard to say what limits can be put to the work of a personality so extraordinary as Jesus Christ. This means a vast assumption, and involves for those who make it a knowledge not only of the consciousness of Jesus during His earthly ministry, but of the power of His personality in history and in the lives of men. On the basis of His unique relation to God on the one hand and to the world on the other, the powers He possessed and the actions He wrought appeal to us as natural and proper.

A very superficial study of the self-consciousness of Jesus as presented to us in the Gospels shows that He believed Himself to be possessed of unique powers, and

that in using them He adhered to a definite plan or law. If the story of the Temptation means anything it means a fixed determination on the part of Jesus never to use His powers to secure His own safety or aggrandisement, or in order to beat down the resistance of unbelief. The story of His ministry shows this purpose to be dominant at every point. In His use of signs, as the miracles are called, He is sparing and reluctant. He charges secrecy on many of those who benefit by them, and holds Himself, as it were, at the mercy of their attitude. Faith was the condition on which alone He was able to help men, and of one place we read, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." When asked to give some striking exhibition of His power in order to convince men as to His claims He utterly refused, and He never lifted a finger in order to help Himself. Most of His miracles simply arose out of His deep compassion for the needs and sorrows of the people around Him; but even then He gave His help with no lavish hand, and was evidently conscious of the double-edged character of the weapons He wielded and of the danger accompanying their use. All these are considerations of the first importance in estimating the miracles of Jesus Christ. They show Him to stand in an altogether different category from other miracle-

workers. They argue strongly for the verisimilitude of the Gospel narratives, for it is impossible that the writers could have invented a picture so consistent and so restrained. And they offer a theory of His action which is at once probable and worthy of the highest claims which can be made on His behalf.

But here again it must be admitted that we make large assumptions. That the universe as a whole expresses the will of God and moves according to His plan. That the moral order is supreme, and that a Divine purpose runs through all things. That Jesus Christ appeared as part of this Divine purpose, and that the natural order is not violated by His coming or by any actions that He performed. It is important too to remember, as Professor Gwatkin admirably points out, that "The natural order does not mean simply the physical order of things, but that order as modified by the action of persons: for even the necessitarians who finally resolve such action into the physical order do not deny that it brings out results, and that some results are not brought out without it. Hence no result is contrary to the natural order unless it cannot be reached by any action of persons. Now, the results which men obtain from the natural order depend mainly on their knowledge of science. As the

results which the ancients obtained are no measure of those we ourselves obtain, so these, again, are no measure of the results we hope our children will obtain by a better knowledge of science. Yet if science is true sympathy with the power behind Nature, it is but imperfect and one-sided sympathy. It is imperfect because it is an uncompleted evolution; and it is one-sided because it so poorly represents the moral side implied in the trustworthiness of that power. Yet, such as it is, it gives us such power over Nature as we possess. At this point I submit that even the greatest imaginable victories of science are no measure of the results a man might obtain, if he were in perfect sympathy of feeling, thought, and will with the Divine order of the entire universe—a character theologically described as without sin. To put the matter in a concrete form, let us imagine the story true, that Jesus of Nazareth was such a man. In that case He must have had power far greater than our own, and been able to do in a perfectly natural way many things we cannot do, and some, perhaps, which no advance of science that we can look for would enable us to do. If we think out what the supposition means we may find it not unlikely that most of the ‘signs’ ascribed to Him would be well within the power of

such a man. Nobody doubts that His vivid sympathy might account for some obscure healings: but once we are off the ground of technical scientific skill we can establish no distinction of kind between these signs and others which seem to lie further from common experience. Given such a man, I see nothing unlikely in the story that he had power to raise the dead." The whole question of the miracles, therefore, runs back into that of the Personality of Jesus. The two stand or fall together.

Turning, then, once more to the Gospel history, we note certain distinctions in the character of the miracles recorded. There are: (1) The miracles worked on the human subject, such as the healing of demoniacs (Matt. viii. 28, ix. 32, xii. 22, xv. 21, xvii. 14; Mark i. 23); of the impotent man at Bethesda (John v. 9); of the man with the withered hand (Matt. xii. 10); of the woman with the spirit of infirmity (Luke xiii. 11); of various paralytics (Matt. viii. 5 and ix. 2); of the blind (Matt. ix. 27, xx. 30; Mark viii. 22; John ix. 1); of lepers (Matt. viii. 2; Luke xvii. 11); the raising of the dead, *e.g.* the daughter of Jairus (Matt. ix. 23); the son of the widow of Nain (Luke vii. 11); and Lazarus (John xi. 43). (2) The miracles worked upon Nature, such as the cursing of the barren fig-tree

(Matt. xxi. 18); the stilling of the storm (Matt. viii. 26); the walking on the sea (Matt. xiv. 25). Among these, too, must be placed the feeding of the four and five thousand (Matt. xv. 32 and xiv. 19); as well as the changing of water into wine at Cana (John ii. 1). (3) Standing in a category by themselves, as difficult to estimate as they are to classify, are the following: the miraculous draughts of fish (Luke v. 1 and John xxi. 6); and the finding of the money in the fish's mouth (Matt. xvii. 24).

Turning now to the evidence for the miracles in general, it has to be noted that the various classes of miracles stand very much on the same level. It is not possible to accept the miracles of healing, for instance, and reject the Nature miracles as being less duly authenticated. No doubt it may seem to some easier to account for the former than for the latter, but so far as the history is concerned instances of both kinds occur in the earliest sources of the life of Jesus. If, as is now generally conceded, the tendency of recent critical investigation has, on the whole, been to establish rather than to destroy the historicity of the Gospel narratives in general, then it must be admitted that the evidence for the miracles is strong, and that the difficulties in the way of those who would

summarily reject them are very great. This does not mean that all the miracles are to be placed on the same level. Allowance has to be made for the tendency on the part of observers in those days to look for the miraculous, and for consequent exaggerations, more or less unconscious, in individual cases. It is of these that Dr. Sanday's dictum holds good. "We may be sure that if the miracles of the first century had been wrought before trained spectators of the nineteenth, the version of them would be quite different." If, however, God reveals Himself to each age in the language which that age can understand, and under the forms to which it is accustomed, then there is a certain congruity in the miraculous element in the Gospels. The preconceptions of the age in which we live must not be allowed to destroy our sense of historical perspective. On the same grounds, we have to admit the reasonableness and the historical truth of the attitude which our Lord Himself took up towards these "signs." In dealing with the demoniacs, for instance, He spoke and acted, as He was wont to do, in accordance with the current ideas of the time. The assumption was necessary in order to enable Him to meet men on their own ground, and bring to them the help which He had it in His power to

give. It was a necessary consequence of His Incarnation that He should use His powers under the usual limitations of His age and of the circumstances of His life.¹

For, as has already been suggested, the miracles of Jesus cannot be considered apart from the interpretation of His personality. He began His ministry conscious of a vocation, and of powers given Him in order to exercise it. His use of these powers is sparing and cautious. There is no display about it, and no attempt to benefit Himself thereby. His motives are those of His ministry in general, a pure pity for lost and fallen men, and a passionate desire to save. The miracles are sometimes objected to because it is said that they are unworthy of the character of Jesus Christ. This is surely to misunderstand altogether His own attitude towards them. Rightly regarded, they can only enhance our appreciation of His relations with men, of the loftiness of His motives, and of the wonderful restraint He showed in the use of His powers. The moral and spiritual miracle involved in all this is the one we have first to face; this admitted, the rest becomes

¹ Cf. article on "Demonology" in Hastings' "Dictionary" by Dr. Whitehouse. "We are dealing with the reports of chroniclers whose minds were necessarily coloured by the prevailing beliefs of the age, psychic and cosmic."

comparatively easy, or at least conceivable. No doubt the view of the contemporaries of Jesus was somewhat different. They saw in His marvellous works the signs of His power, and the justification for His claims, and they judged accordingly. They were perfectly right in so doing, and acted according to their lights. If the miracles are rejected it becomes quite impossible to account for their appreciation of Jesus and of His work. But we are equally justified in looking at the matter from a different point of view. To us the supreme miracle is the Person of Jesus Christ, seen as we see it, in the light of history and experience. In our eyes He authenticates His miracles. Being such an one as He was, He could not have done other than He did. This conclusion does not debar us from using all the knowledge that has come to us in these latter days to explain His methods, and to account for the results He achieved. As our knowledge grows it may be possible to do this more satisfactorily. Meanwhile, "I believe, help Thou mine unbelief," is the best possible expression of the only becoming attitude of mind on the subject. The whole question is well summed up by Dr. Illingworth as follows:¹ "If the Incarnation was a fact, and Jesus Christ was

¹ "Divine Immanence," pp. 88-90.

what He claimed to be, His miracles, so far from being improbable, will appear the most natural thing in the world. . . . They are so essentially a part of the character depicted in the Gospels that without them that character would entirely disappear. They flow naturally from a Person who, despite His obvious humanity, impresses us throughout as being at home in two worlds. . . . We cannot separate the wonderful life, or the wonderful teaching, from the wonderful works. They involve and interpenetrate and presuppose each other, and form in their insoluble combination one harmonious picture."

CHAPTER V

THE TEACHING

IN the mission which Jesus came into the world to accomplish the work of teaching holds a very important place. He came to "open the blind eyes and to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon," to dissipate ancient prejudices, and to set forth wider views of truth. For such work His contemporaries were well prepared. To them the figure of the Rabbi was a familiar one, and could always command an audience. This was the ready mould into which Jesus shaped His work. But He was much more than a teacher, much more than an ordinary Rabbi. He was Himself the greater part of His teaching. He set before men not so much truth in the abstract, but truth embodied in a person. He exemplified His own doctrine. With astonishing boldness He called men and women unto Himself, and set before them in His own Person the example they were to follow and the way they were to tread. He taught them with authority, *i.e.* as one who had a right to speak, about the deep

things of God, and about the application of them to the simple problems of every-day life. Life in its broadest as well as in its narrowest sense was His subject, and He was Himself the Life, the Truth, and the Way. In recent years there has been a great revival of interest in the teaching of Jesus, and in its application to the problems of social service and individual development. It is recognised that the doctrine of the Son of man is concerned not merely with theology but with ethics. The cry, "Back to Christ!" means often "Back to the teaching of Jesus," and the effort to discover in it principles of conduct is among the most healthy features of the religious life of to-day. To examine the teaching of Jesus in detail would be far beyond the scope of the present inquiry, but something in the way of outline or summary must be attempted.

1. Form and Method of the Teaching.—As in all things Jesus accepted the conditions and limitations of His environment, so in His teaching He attached Himself to Jewish custom and tradition. He accepted the rôle both of the prophet and of the scribe, and there was a certain originality in His combination of the two. But He identified Himself with no class or party either among His predecessors or contemporaries. All attempts to label Him have proved failures. He stands altogether by Himself, and the striking feature about His words

was that "He spake with authority, and not as do the scribes." The scribe was above everything else a traditionalist, bound hand and foot by the past. Jesus used the past, but used it freely, as its master not as its slave. "It hath been said unto you by them of old time—but I say unto you," was a familiar formula in His mouth. The impression which He makes is one of strength and mastery, and this is confirmed both by the form and substance of His doctrine. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" asked the Pharisees. They were astonished that one who had not passed through their schools, and had never taken their degree, should show the wisdom and insight which this Teacher possessed. "From whatever side we approach the life of Jesus this impression of mastery confronts us. On the one hand is the ethical aspect of strength. . . . Solemn exaltations of mood, experiences of prolonged temptation, moments of mystic rapture, occur indeed in His career : but when we consider what a part these emotional agitations have played in the history of religion, we are profoundly impressed by the sanity, reserve, composure, and steadiness of the character of Jesus. He is no example of the 'twice-born' conception of piety, which has been of late presented to us with such vigour and charm. His 'Religion of Healthy-mindedness' is not a psychopathic emotionalism, but a normal,

rational, ethical growth. His method is not that of ecstasy, vision, nervous agitation, issuing in neurological saintliness ; it is educative, sane, consistent with wise service of the world, capable of being likened in an infinite variety of ways to the decisions and obligations which every honest man must meet.”¹

These characteristics of strength and sanity belong also to the external form of the teaching of Jesus. He is no pedant, delighting in details of exposition, but broad and free and even familiar in His treatment of the subject. He speaks to the people in their own language, dealing with principles rather than details, and painting with a large and rapid brush. The truths He sets before His hearers are seed truths, destined, perhaps, to bear fruit after a long germination, and depending for their issue upon the suitability of the soil into which they fall. The common features of the life of His time are pressed freely into service. The home, the field, the market-place, the highway, and the synagogue all serve for backgrounds, and His treatment of them shows Him to be a master of expression. But this local colour is so used as not to blur the note of universality in the teaching. It is with man as man that Jesus deals. He uses the conditions to which He was subject as their master, and

¹ “Jesus Christ and the Christian Character,” by F. G. Peabody, pp. 54, 55.

by means of them speaks to the universal heart of man. This is perhaps best seen in His favourite device of the parable, a form into which much of the teaching is cast, and which needs some special notice. The term parable means the setting of one thing beside another for purposes of instruction by comparison or contrast. It is to be distinguished from fable and myth and from teaching by allegory. The parables of Jesus are, generally speaking, simple earthly stories or incidents used for the purposes of spiritual instruction by analogy. They are of great literary beauty, and so pointed and even obvious that the most uninstructed hearer can hardly fail to grasp their lesson. Some of them are very brief, hardly more than proverbs and seed parables. Others, again, are longer and more elaborate, and need interpretation before their full meaning can be grasped. Most of them have to do with the kingdom of heaven, and set forth the truth of the doctrine of the kingdom "embodied in a tale." The parables have been variously classified, the simplest method being that followed by Edersheim. He divides them into three groups, distinguished by the time and place of their delivery. (1) Those belonging to the ministry in and near Capernaum, given in Matt. xiii.; (2) those belonging to the journeyings from Galilee to Jerusalem, given in Luke x. 18; and (3) those belonging to the last days in Jerusalem. The

first group deals mainly with the kingdom as a whole, the second with individual members of the kingdom, and the third with the judgment passed on members of the kingdom. It was a very profound insight which led Jesus Christ to the use of this form of teaching. It appealed most effectively to the kind of people with whom He had to deal, and yet required on their part some sympathy with His point of view. Only on such an assumption can we understand the very difficult references in the Synoptic Gospels to the prophecy in Isaiah vi. 9-10, which would seem to imply that the parables were used to darken counsel and to bring on those who failed to understand them a greater condemnation. The very word of God is a means of judging men; their attitude to it fixes their attitude to Him. In regard to the interpretation of the parables there has always been some difference of opinion between those, on the one hand, who are content to discover the main lesson, and those, on the other, who insist on finding some cryptic significance in the smallest details. The safe rule is to follow the method which Jesus Himself indicates in His own interpretation of the parable of the Sower, in which He draws out the lesson of the various parts of the story in the simplest possible way, and avoids all fantastic elaborations.

A distinction has to be drawn between the teaching

given to the disciples and the preaching to the multitudes. It is not, perhaps, always possible clearly to separate the two in the Gospel narratives, but there are certain broad lines of demarcation which may be observed. In the training of the Twelve, Jesus followed more closely the example of the Rabbis. He gathered the little circle round Him, and spoke in intimate terms of the scope and purpose and difficulties of His Messianic work. With the crowd He dealt, naturally, in more popular fashion, and laid the foundations of His doctrine broad and strong. This does not imply, however, that Jesus left with His followers any systematic body of teaching. The only actual words that He taught were those of the Lord's Prayer. For the rest His teaching was occasional, and dependent on the incidents and circumstances He met with. The main impression He left behind was that of His Person. That evidently overshadowed His sayings, and only after He had left them did the disciples remember that He had said such and such things. His conflict with Rabbinism was not merely directed against the traditionalism of the scribes' interpretation of the Law, but also against their methods. He was never a teacher in the same sense that they were.

2. The Subject-matter of the Teaching :—

(a) *God the Father*.—Every new religion begins in a new revelation of God, or in a new emphasis upon some

hitherto half-understood aspect of the Divine nature. Just as the starting-point of the religion of Israel was the new name of Yahweh given to God, so it is often claimed that the central point in the doctrine of Jesus is His conception of the Fatherhood of God. There is, of course, nothing new in the idea. Jesus accepts a name for God which was already familiar, but fills it with a content and meaning of His own. The determining factor in this is His own relationship to God as Son, and it is from that point that all His doctrine of God begins. As Ritschl says, the distinctive New Testament name for God is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," so deep was the impression which Jesus' own personal intuition of God made upon those who first heard Him. The fact that He is Himself conscious of an unique relationship to God is decisive in all His interpretation of God to mankind. No exposition of the teaching of Jesus can be fair or complete which ignores this initial and fundamental fact. From this point of view the use of the term Son of God for Jesus in the New Testament is worth careful study, and serves to indicate not only the conception which the Church had formed in regard to Him but the position which He Himself assumed. He came into the world to do His Father's business (Luke ii. 49), and the consciousness of His communion with the Father and of the Father's approval of His

work sustained Him throughout. It is undoubtedly this reading of His own relationship to the Father that regulates the teaching of Jesus in regard to God and man. He speaks to the disciples of "My Father and yours," and teaches them to pray, "Our Father who art in Heaven." This means a considerable advance upon the old conception of a Fatherhood derived from the fact of creation or generation. With Jesus the term Fatherhood describes even something more than a relationship. It gives the essence or spirit which determines God's action and lies behind it all. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke xv. 11-32) shows the fatherly spirit in action, and gives as the object of its concern not merely Israel, but sinful men of all kinds; and it is noteworthy that Jesus is addressing not the disciples but the multitude when He says, "Call no man your Father on earth: for one is your Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. xxiii. 1-9). In the Fourth Gospel, as is perhaps natural, greater stress still is laid on the universality of the Divine Fatherhood. God is the Father of all men because He loves them. This conception of God, however, does not in any way detract from the strength and sternness of the ethics of Jesus. God's relation to man is not resolved by it, as is sometimes supposed, into mere sentimentalism. The stress which Jesus lays upon the love of God only serves to throw into darker

shadow the horror of man's sin. Sin against a father has a deeper stain of guilt than sin against one who is only a king or a judge. It does not even require positive transgression; the mere absence of trust and love may constitute sin. Therefore forgiveness becomes altogether a more difficult thing, and the conception of God's Fatherhood, so far from doing away with the need for atonement and reconciliation, makes these things the more imperative.

But in the view of Jesus, God's love to men takes the form not merely of redemption but of providence. As their Father, God knows the needs of men, and will supply them without fail. It was surely from the depths of His own consciousness of the Divine presence and love that Jesus spoke those striking words about God's clothing of the fields and care for the birds, and warned His hearers against being over-anxious about food and raiment in the presence of a Father who "knoweth that ye have need of these things." It is heathenish to care for these things so much, and Jesus inculcates a spirit, not of thriftless improvidence, as is sometimes thought, but of quiet trust and freedom from worry. It is the spirit which Frank Buckland showed when he said in his dying moments, "God, who takes such care of the little fishes, will not forget their inspector." There is thus every reason to believe that those expositors are

right who insist that in the mind of Jesus man's relation to God is like that of young children to an earthly father. The truly religious spirit is the childlike spirit—the spirit of humble trust and willing obedience. This is the natural attitude of the soul to God, and it contains within it vast potentialities. The distinction between natural and real sonship is valid enough, and indeed necessary. God is the Father of all, but He can only be known as Father by those who accept the position of sons, and who work out their sonship in daily experience. Originally God's relationship to man is something more than merely physical. The fact of creation involves certain powers and possibilities in the creatures, and these are capable of development. Not, however, till they are developed does the full meaning of the Divine image in which they are made dawn upon men. It was not the least among the aims of the teaching of Jesus to bring home to men first the fact of this Divine relationship, and then to show them the way to its fuller realisation. It is in Him that men reach a true conception of the meaning of God's Fatherhood, and He becomes to them the way to the Father. It is true to say that God is the Father of all men, and that all are by nature His sons, but it is only by grace that they enter into the full range and meaning and enjoyment of their sonship.

This conception of God and of the attitude of men towards Him is well illustrated by the teaching of Jesus in regard to prayer. Here, again, He taught by example as well as by precept. To Him that

“Still communion, which transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,”

was a necessity of the spiritual life and a condition of spiritual activity. It was His custom to retire frequently and at stated seasons, that He might pray in secret to the Father who seeth in secret. He desiderated on the part of His followers the same constant and vivid communion with God, in order that they, too, might be able to work the works of God in the world. As we have seen already, He gave them in the Lord's Prayer a definite form of petition, and one that throws much light on His conception of their needs and of the will of God in regard to them. Its petitions mingle the simplicity of the child with the sublime ambitions of the saint, and the needs of the physical life with those of the spiritual in a very striking fashion. Not less remarkable is the constant insistence of Jesus on the need for reality in prayer. It is well that we should really speak to God and tell Him what we need, though He knoweth what things we have need of already. It is as though the Father delighted in the free requests of His children.

But they are not to use vain repetitions as the heathen do. Men are not heard for their much speaking, but for the spirit in which they speak. Nor are they to imagine that they can by prayer impose their wills upon God. "Thy will be done" is the beginning and end of all true prayer, and its object to bring the will of man into closer accord with that of God. Simplicity of speech, sincerity of thought, and submission of the will are thus the three conditions of approach to God which Jesus implicitly lays down. They present us with a conception of man's relationship to God, in which there is a fine blending of childlike trust and godly fear.

CHAPTER VI

THE TEACHING (*continued*)

(b) *Christ's Doctrine of Man.*—The teaching of Jesus in regard to God necessarily involved a deeper and fuller conception of humanity than was current among His contemporaries. It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that Jesus formulated a definite anthropology or set forth His views of human nature in any formal fashion. His teaching on the subject has to be gathered from things He took for granted rather than from any set pronouncements. Even thus, however, it is sufficiently explicit, as its consequences in Apostolic doctrine clearly enough indicate. The spirit of Jesus was in marked contrast to the jealous exclusiveness of the Judaism of His day. He was sent first, He admitted, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but He had other sheep which were not of this fold. He was concerned with man as man, and not as Jew or Greek, bond or free. His purpose on the earth was to save men, and the mere statement of this purpose involved

the belief in the salvability of all men. The sharpest criticism of His contemporaries was aroused by the fact that Jesus was concerned to meet on the footing of a common humanity with those whom the world considered to be outcasts. "He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners" (Matt. xi. 19, Luke xv. 1) became the first and chief count in their indictment against Him. Jesus accepted to the full the fact of man's sin, with its awful consequences in sorrow and suffering. But He also accepted the fact of man's freedom, and therefore of the possibility of his co-operation in the act of healing and forgiveness. In His eyes sinners were "the lost"; but, to Him, whatever was lost might be saved. He preached a Gospel of hope. And He saved sinners like Matthew the publican and Mary the Magdalen, because in Him they realised for the first time that there was hope even for them. In the teaching of Jesus, man is therefore a being of infinite worth, because of a genuinely spiritual nature and Divine capability. And it was in order to make these possibilities actual that Jesus came into the world. These are the "glad tidings" of God which He has to bring.

(c) *The Kingdom of God*.—The vehicle in which the message of Jesus to mankind was conveyed is known as His doctrine of the kingdom of God or of heaven. Both He and John the Baptist came preaching that the

kingdom of heaven was at hand ; but though the text in both cases was the same, a very different interpretation has to be put upon it. John represented the old dispensation, and his view of the kingdom closely resembled the Messianic teaching of the prophets. It involved an ethical revival as a preliminary to the re-establishment of the theocracy. With Jesus, however, the kingdom is something much more original and positive. It is at once present and future, actual and ideal. It means the reign of God in humanity. The kingdom comes when men do the will of God, and comes in all men who do His will. It is not an organisation but a spirit, not a society but a temper, an instinct, an attitude. It is among or within men, and it comes without observation ; nevertheless the fruits of it are manifest, and in God's good time it will be consummated in the universal humanity of which Jesus Christ Himself is the head. Jesus' preaching of the kingdom was without either form or detail. Our idea of it has to be gathered from many scattered references, parables, and apocalyptic sayings. In the interpretation of these there is room for wide diversities of opinion, but, in spite of this, the general features of the kingdom are sufficiently distinct, and afford a picture of exceeding interest and spiritual beauty.

It is now generally agreed that both terms, "kingdom

of God" and "kingdom of heaven," were used by Jesus Himself, the latter being probably an euphemism for the former, and that they mean a ruling of earthly things according to Divine or heavenly laws. The conception was one which the Messianic prophecies had made familiar to the contemporaries of Jesus, but His first work was to dissociate it from some of the ideas with which it was inevitably connected in the popular mind. As Sanday says, "The contemporaries of Jesus, when they spoke of 'the kingdom of God,' thought chiefly of an empire contrasted with the great world-empires, more especially the Roman, which galled them at the moment. And the two features which caught their imagination most were the throwing off of the hated yoke and the transference of supremacy from the heathen to Israel. This was to be brought about by a catastrophe which was to close the existing order of things, and which therefore took a shape which was eschatological." Of Jesus' doctrine of the last things in connection with the kingdom we shall speak later. Meanwhile it is important to note that He gave no countenance to the popular desire for a revolt against Rome, and that His teaching throughout takes a spiritual rather than a material or political form. No doubt the principles which He inculcated had vast social and political consequences, but it was with the principles themselves

that He was chiefly concerned. The parable of the leaven exactly expresses the situation. He hid the leaven of His teaching in human hearts, and it has been working ever since, and will go on working to the end of time.

Thus Jesus' idea of the kingdom was not that of a philosophy slowly developing in the minds of men, but of a supernatural power descending as it were upon them from the without and the beyond. The kingdom "comes," "is given," "is prepared," has to be "inherited," "sought for," and "entered into." As Bousset puts it: "Jesus did not say to the people, 'The moment has arrived for you to do something that the kingdom may come, for you to compel its coming;' that was the captivating message of the fanatical patriots who sought to effect insurrections in Galilee at that time. But to Jesus it was absolutely certain that the every-day doings and the earthly labour of man could not bring the coming of the kingdom one finger's-breadth nearer. For Him the coming of the kingdom was something entirely *miraculous* and *future*. The living Almighty God, and He alone, will set up His miraculous kingdom." That the perfecting of the kingdom will not come about till the distant future Jesus makes abundantly clear, but it is equally part of His teaching that the kingdom has its beginning in the hearts of men here and now. It

means the working of invisible laws, which gradually extend their operation until the time comes when all men are under their sway. There is very little doubt that the Christian Church is the instrument by which Jesus intended that His kingdom should be advanced in the world—a view which supplies the only possible answer to the vexed question as to the relation between the kingdom and the Church. The Church is an institution and the kingdom an influence, and the two are never to be identified. They stand rather in the relation of means and end, the Church being the divinely appointed means for the realisation of the Divine ends of the kingdom. The kingdom is thus the wider and the Church the narrower and more limited conception. The Church, too, is to be estimated by the success with which it fulfils the aims which the kingdom sets before it, and prepares the way for the final and universal reign of God among men. It would be quite in accordance with the ideas of Jesus to regard the Church as the soil which receives the good seed of the kingdom, so that it germinates and puts forth, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Many of the parables emphasise the idea that the growth of the kingdom can only be slow, but they look forward at the same time to a final establishment of the reign of God in righteousness, when the kingdom shall have “come.”

The nature of the kingdom is perhaps best understood from the conditions which Jesus laid down for entrance into it, and from the qualities which were expected of its members. The preaching of the kingdom was always associated with repentance, and no man could enter it until he had come to himself as did the Prodigal in the parable. Change of heart, revolt against the sinful past, and acceptance of a new rôle, were the inevitable beginnings of the new life. "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). In the Fourth Gospel the new life of the kingdom is entered by a new birth, which is accompanied by a baptism of water and of the Spirit (John iii. 5). That baptism was to be the sign of entrance into the kingdom rather than a condition precedent was assumed from the teaching of Jesus. It was a token of the Divine forgiveness which always followed the act of repentance. It is quite clear that in the mind of Jesus the spiritual change necessary to membership in His kingdom was positive as well as negative; that it not only left the things that were behind, but reached forward to the things that were before. It involved, that is to say, the putting on of what the Apostle Paul came afterwards to call a new man in Christ Jesus. The descriptions of this new man, and of the lineaments of his character, are among the

most notable things in the teaching of Jesus. The note of childlikeness, simplicity, and humble trust struck at the outset is dominant all through. The ideal thus depicted stands in marked contrast to most other ideals of human character, and especially to those chiefly in vogue in the ancient world. There could hardly be a deeper distinction than that between the magnanimous man of Aristotle and the Christian as Christ painted him. In the ancient as in the modern world, the pushful and aggressive virtues were those most in favour. The sons of the kingdom, however, were to be distinguished chiefly by meekness, poverty of spirit (which does not mean poor-spiritedness), mercifulness, purity of heart, humility, and the like. Love to God and to one's neighbour summed up for them the whole duty of man, and their love of their neighbours was to be shown by a spirit of service and self-denial in all their relations with their fellows. The type of character set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, beautiful and attractive as it is, has never won the place either in Christian preaching or in Christian practice that it deserves. Yet there can be no question that Jesus meant every word that He spoke in this connection, and that the kingdom of God will only come when men and women are framed on this model and exhibit this spirit. Both in the ancient and in the modern world the ideal of Jesus has been

rejected as unpractical, and as impossible of realisation in any organised society. But the best commendation of an ideal is the difficulty of realising it, and the ethical teaching of Jesus is known and justified by its fruits. Already it has profoundly modified the whole of human conduct. It has entered human society like the leaven of the parable, and if the whole lump is not yet leavened that is only to say that the kingdom is not yet come. It must be remembered, too, that Jesus was legislating for a society within society, that He aimed and aims still to reform society from above, and that new conditions are needed before His precepts can have full scope. The ethics of Jesus are inseparable from His religion, and the two taken together form a combination of irresistible beauty and strength. "It was not an accident that Christianity is the religion of the Crucified. The Cross is like the culminating expression of a spirit which was characteristic of it throughout. Its peculiar note is, *Victory through suffering*. An idea like that of Islam, making its way by the sword, was abhorrent to it from the first. Jesus came to be the Messiah of the Jews, but the narratives of the Temptation teach us that, from the very beginning of His career, He stripped off from His conception of the Messiahship all that was political, all thought of propagating His claims by force. A new mode of propagating religion was deliberately chosen,

and carried through with uncompromising thoroughness. The disciple was not above his Master ; and the example which Jesus set in founding His faith by dying for it, was an example which His disciples were called upon to follow into all its logical consequences. Christianity, the true Christianity, carries no arms : it wins its way by lowly service, by patience, by self-sacrifice.”¹

One of the chief gains of modern Biblical study is an ethical rather than a metaphysical interpretation of the Person of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the only justification of that much-abused cry, “Back to Christ !” is that it leads us to explain Him in the light of His own teaching rather than in that of any system of human philosophy. And no one can deny that in the teaching of Jesus the ethical element largely predominates. It has already been pointed out that He was Himself the doctrine He taught. In His own Person is to be found the best exemplification of His words. He called men and women to come unto Him and to follow Him, that in so doing they might find the true life of God in the world. It was no ascetic ideal to which He pointed His followers, but a life of active service both of God and man. The righteousness of the kingdom was to be both higher and better than the current Jewish righteousness of the time, strict and scrupulous as that was. Jesus did not

¹ Sanday, “Outlines of the Life of Christ,” p. 88.

despise law, but His law was a very different thing from the outward legalism of the Pharisees. He looked at motive, intention, and desire as being at least as significant morally as their outward expression in conduct. The will to do, rather than the act, was the all-important factor in His eyes. Humble submission of the will to the rule of God in the soul is the only way to true blessedness. This means a relationship to God based on love and expressed in prayers and filial obedience. It means also that the disciple learns to see as with God's eyes and to judge others more as He judges them, and so to behave towards them in a spirit of true self-forgetfulness and charity (*cf.* Matt. vii. 21). The type of character which Jesus strove to bring about in men is based on struggle, discipline, and self-denial. His ethical teaching, though social in its consequences, is based on a keen appreciation of the value of the individual soul, which can only find itself by complete submission to God and an exclusive passion for spiritual ends. This explains the apparent harshness and difficulty of some of the precepts of Jesus, *e.g.* "Resist not him that is evil" (Matt. v. 39); "Give to him that asketh thee" (Matt. v. 42); "If any man love father or mother more than me," &c. (Luke xiv. 26 and Matt. x. 27), and the like. These and many other sayings of the same kind are not to be interpreted as universal and

unalterable laws, but rather as laying down principles which have to be applied by the men of every age according to the circumstances in which they are placed. Just as the stress of Jesus is laid on dispositions rather than on single actions, so the life of the kingdom will be regulated not by the details of a complete legal system but by the free and intelligent service of dedicated spirits. Beside purity of heart, singleness of purpose, and love, all other things have only relative values, and will fall into their proper place. To put first things first was the aim of the teaching of Jesus, and the kingdom was the sphere in which this teaching was to be practised.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEACHING (*concluded*)

(*d*) *The Messiah*.—Every student of the life of Jesus Christ is faced with the question, “What was His relationship to the Messianic teaching and expectation of His day?” There is no doubt that the aim of the four Gospels is to prove, or at least to set forth to the world, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This could not be attempted without assuming that He came to fulfil the expectation of the people that a Messiah (a divinely anointed one) should come and restore the kingdom to Israel. There is no doubt, too, that Jesus Himself taught that this expectation was realised in Himself—and that He stood in an unique relationship to God on the one hand and to man on the other. Proof of this, if needed, may be found in Peter’s confession at Cæsarea, in the account of the entry into Jerusalem, in Jesus’ oath before the High Priest, and in the Roman inscription on the Cross. The difficulty of the subject for us, however, arises

from the fact that the conception which Jesus Himself held of His vocation was widely different from the popular Messianic ideas of His time. In fulfilling the Messianic conception He transformed it, and His peculiar interpretation of it has to be studied in all its bearings, apart from its Old Testament model.

In the time of Jesus the expectation of a Messiah was widely prevalent throughout Palestine and the whole Jewish world, but the forms which the expectation took were both various and vague. The more educated and religious sections of the people based their belief in the Messiah on the Old Testament Scriptures and on various apocalyptic writings, but with the vulgar the Messianic hope took a much more political and material shape. There is a certain distinction to be maintained between an earthly and a heavenly conception of Messiah's kingdom, though these were often combined, and the same men believed that the Son of David who should come would restore the political supremacy to Israel. There is no clear proof, however, that the Messiah was regarded as being necessarily divine or supernatural, nor can it be shown that there was any general expectation that He would suffer for the sins of the people. Though popular religious thought in the first century B.C. was saturated with the idea of the coming of a

king who should establish a new kingdom in peace and righteousness, the conception never attained either coherence or unity. So far as the work of Jesus is concerned, it cannot be said that the Messianic idea, as He found it, did more than provide a background for His teaching, and a line of thought which He could easily adapt for His purposes. The men and women of His own immediate circle were among those pious souls who were looking for the consolation of Israel, and who held the more spiritual view of the form which that consolation should take. It was a perfectly natural thing that, as their intimacy with Jesus grew, they should come to attach to Him those high hopes and beliefs which they had long cherished. It was also natural, and strictly in accordance with His methods, that He should use the fact as the vehicle of His larger teaching. The scene at Cæsarea Philippi, and the confession of Peter, witness to the reality of the disciples' belief. But the words of Jesus, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee (*e.g.* that I am the Christ), but my Father in heaven," show that He Himself admitted the position, and wished them to accept Him as the one who was to come. There is practically no evidence for the opinion now often urged, that the disciples did not come to regard Jesus

as Messiah till after His death. As Wernle says, "The belief of the disciples in their Messiah must be older than Jesus' death, for it could not entirely arise after that death, which was such a grievous disappointment to so many expectations. If it is older than Jesus' death, it is incredible that Jesus did not share it, and yet suffered it to be held."

We are on much more difficult ground when we come to answer the question as to how far Jesus intended the disciples to attach to Himself the popular Messianic conceptions. This involves an examination of the whole of His teaching in regard to Himself and to His mission in the world, and such an examination results in the conviction that while Jesus accepted the Messianic form, He filled it with a content that was all His own.

1. This is seen, in the first place, in the names which Jesus used of Himself. Of these, far the most important is the term Son of man. This is found some eighty times in the Gospels, and is generally regarded as the title which Jesus used as best expressing His office among men. As to its meaning very varied explanations have been given, but of them all only two stand out as deserving notice. One is that the phrase is used always in the sense of its Aramaic original, which simply means "man," *i.e.* in the sense of "mankind";

and the other is that the term is used in the Messianic sense in which it is frequently found in Daniel and the Book of Enoch, where the Son of man is a superhuman Person whose office is to judge the quick and the dead, to vindicate the righteous, and to punish the wicked. When we come to study the use of the title by Jesus Himself there seems every reason for believing that both these significations were involved in it. It is evident that the phrase was not a new one, though it was not altogether familiar (Matt. xvi. 13). It had a certain Messianic content, and in the usage of Jesus was frequently connected with ideas of apocalypse and judgment (*cf.* Matt. xiii. 41, xvi. 28, xix. 28, xxiv. 30, xxv. 31, xxvi. 64, &c.). It is noteworthy also that the phrase is used in connection with His death and suffering when Jesus foretold these things to the disciples (Mark viii. 31). At the same time, it is clear that the wider use of the term as equivalent to mankind (or perhaps we may say, the representative or ideal man) was not infrequently before the mind of Jesus—*e.g.* "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." This latter view, however, cannot be taken exclusively without doing violence to the Gospel narratives. It is abundantly clear that this most significant title attests the claim of Jesus to stand in an unique relationship to mankind. It meant on His lips that He had the power

of forgiveness and judgment, and that the destinies of the race were in some way bound up in Him.

The name Son of God is more frequently given to Jesus by others than used by Himself. But more significant even than the actual use of the name is the assumption of a special filial relationship to God involved in the words "My Father," which were so often in the mouth of Jesus (*cf.* Matt. vii. 21, x. 32, xi. 27, &c.). It is quite evident that the disciples of Jesus gathered from His teaching and, may we not say, from His prayers, that He was God's Son in a very real and exclusive sense, and that He neither did nor said anything to disabuse them of the idea.

2. A much more important aspect of the Messianic consciousness of Jesus is His conception of the work which He had come into the world to do. This serves to fill out the content of the names He used. His mission as He conceived it was to save men from their sins. The notion of the Messiah as a Deliverer He made all His own, but the deliverance He contemplated was not either political or material, but spiritual in its aim and scope. He came not to set up a new State, but to make new men. In His eyes the great enemy was not the imperial might of the Cæsars, but the power and mischief of sin. In regard to this Jesus was under no illusions, for from the very outset of His

ministry He realised that this deliverance would not be won save at the price of Himself, that the Son of man would need to give Himself a ransom for many. The story of the Temptation is the beginning of the sacrifice of the Cross ; it strikes at the very outset that note which remains dominant throughout the ministry. No doubt this conception gained in intensity as Jesus came into closer contact with the sins and miseries of men. But it did not originate with His knowledge of these things. It was with Him from the first. Though He only disclosed it by degrees to the disciples, and as they were able to hear it, it was ever in the background of His own mind, and to ignore it is to misunderstand alike His ministry and His teaching. That the Son of man must suffer, that He had a baptism to be baptized with and a cup to drink, that He came into the world to minister and to give His life a ransom for many, represented the necessity laid upon Him not merely by the sin of man, but by His own nature and the purpose of His life (*cf.* Mark ii. 20, viii. 31, 33 ; Matt. xvi. 21). This idea of the Messianic function reaches its culmination in the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mark xiv. 22 ; Matt. xxvi. 28 ; Luke xxii. 19). The words there used are most significant, and throw much light on Jesus' own conception of His work. Briefly

they mean that He looked forward to His own death not merely as the end of His career, but as a necessary and most important part of His Messianic work, that He attributed to it a certain saving significance, and that He connected it in His own mind in some way with the forgiveness of sins. It is on the fact that these ideas are unmistakably present in the teaching of Jesus that the whole doctrine of the Church regarding salvation, atonement, and the like has been built. But for our immediate purpose the important point is that to the mind of Jesus Himself these ideas were continually present. When criticism has done its worst with them there still remains this wonderful conception of Jesus as a Saviour of men, and one willing to give Himself to the uttermost for their salvation. This may not be Messianic in the usually accepted sense of the term, but it was chief among the functions of the Messiah as Jesus conceived them.

3. Another and very important element in the Messianic teaching of Jesus is its connection with the doctrine of the last things. It is a mistake, however, to try and frame an elaborate eschatology from His words. He spoke in poetry and figure and adopted ideas current in His time. It is a grave error to turn His poetry into prose. Though the progress of the kingdom of

heaven was necessarily to be slow, it would one day reach a final consummation. This consummation was ever present to the thought of Jesus. He had no notion of evil as a permanent and necessary force in the universe. Ultimately it was to be thwarted. The love of God will triumph in the end, and His kingdom will be finally established, Jesus Christ Himself being the appointed instrument in the work. This triumph takes a twofold form in the resurrection of individuals and the judgment of the race. It is inseparably connected in thought with a last day, a last judgment, and with the second coming of the Messiah in glory. These ideas have been described as "temporal expressions for unspeakable and timeless realities." It is not always easy to distinguish them in the teaching of Jesus. He Himself asserts His ignorance of the times and seasons when they may be expected. "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). So in Acts i. 7: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority." In apparent contradiction with this are a number of sayings which prophesy the coming of the kingdom within the lifetime of the then present generation (*cf.* Mark ix. 1, xiii. 30; Matt. xxv., xxxi. 32, and xxvi. 64). These and other

similar passages, however, may very well be regarded as references to the death of Jesus Himself, an apparent defeat, but a real victory of the power and love of God. Such references as these are spiritualised in the Fourth Gospel (*cf.* John xiv. 18, 28, and xii. 31), where even the judgment of the Son of man is regarded as a present spiritual judgment (*cf.* "Now is the judgment of this world"). The death of Jesus is regarded as one stage in the eschatological process; and the imminent fall of Jerusalem is looked upon as another (*cf.* Matt. xxiv. and Mark xiii.). In the minds of the Evangelists there is unquestionably some confusion between these various stages and events, and we have not the data to enable us satisfactorily to disentangle it. The final scene in the process is one of judgment, and the remarkable thing about this is that Jesus identifies it with His own coming again in glory, and teaches that it is in Him that men will be judged. "Inasmuch as ye have done it or done it not unto one of the least of these, ye have done it or done it not unto me."

Many vexed questions arise here, but it is only possible to suggest that there are certain indications which seem to point to the possibility of a period of probation after death. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a case in point, and may be compared with such

phrases as "Entering into life maimed," and "the sin which will not be forgiven either in this life or in that which is to come." This, however, is not allowed to detract from the seriousness of the issues at stake. The life that a man now lives determines his future, and is therefore weighted with infinite significance. In the final judgment that awaits all men Jesus Christ is both the judge and the law or standard by which men are judged. The end of the judgment is the final establishment of the kingdom of heaven in righteousness and peace.

Such is the picture of His person and work which Jesus suffered to grow before the minds of His first followers. At best it is but an outline, often blurred, and always needing details to be filled in. It is impossible now always to distinguish between the words of Jesus Himself and the reflections of His reporters. Nor can we be sure that they rightly express what they heard from Him. His teaching was of set purpose cast in the mould of ideas and phrases which were familiar to them, and we cannot now always distinguish between what is substance and what is merely form. Still less can we conclude how far in the mind of Jesus the peculiar Messianic form which His teaching concerning Himself assumed was meant to be permanent. In spite of all

these uncertainties, however, the main facts of the position stand out with sufficient clearness. The estimate which the early Church formed of Jesus, and the language used regarding Him in the canonical epistles, had their origin and justification in the facts of His earthly career and in the impression which these facts had left on the minds of the first disciples. All the records go to show that the main feature about the earthly appearance and teaching of Jesus was a note of authority or power. The claims He made were, to the men who knew Him, entirely consonant with His actions and with His general attitude. Their chief surprise was in the fact that He did not follow up these claims in the way which they had always been taught to expect. If He had marshalled legions of angels and called down fire from heaven, there would have been nothing in the action to astonish them. It was because He did not do these things that His Messiahship seemed so strange a thing. Another factor in the situation is that Jesus Himself, though unmistakably conscious of His power, was so entirely reserved in the use of it. His vast claim was put forth in a manner so humble, and His power was exercised so sparingly, that it is no wonder that men should mistake both His spirit and His actions. This is not after the manner of men, and it should really be

counted more marvellous in our eyes than some of those obvious marvels at which we are inclined to stumble. There can be no doubt, then, that Jesus suffered men to think of Him as one who had come into the world to fulfil the Divine plan concerning men and their salvation, to mediate to them the will of God, and to open to them the way to God. There can be no doubt also that He saw, and would have them see, in Himself one who stood in a peculiar relationship to God, and who had a right to speak with authority in the name of God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ACTIVE MINISTRY

WE have now to take up again the threads of the story of the ministry of Jesus. The period under survey covers the latter part of the year A.D. 27 up to the Pass-over in the beginning of A.D. 28, and is marked by a more definite and detailed preaching of the kingdom and by a number of miracles, which serve not only, as they have been called, as "the great bell before the sermon," but are themselves a very real part of the teaching. It is in this period, too, that Jesus begins to differentiate His own teaching on the kingdom from that of John the Baptist, and that in so doing He first arouses the hostility of the authorised religious teachers of His day. It must never be forgotten that at first the ministry of Jesus in Galilee met with a great, if somewhat superficial, popular success. Even the common people saw in Him a teacher very different from the scribes and doctors of the law whom they were accustomed to hear. These were mere echoes of the past,

exponents and interpreters of a law whose precepts they had eviscerated of all spiritual content, and of which they had only the dry bones left to offer to hungry men. In sharp contrast with these, Jesus spake on His own authority and with first-hand knowledge. He appealed not to tradition, but to the religious instinct and common sense of His hearers. "Ye have heard how it hath been said unto you by them of old time—but I say unto you," was a frequent formula on His lips. Therefore the people heard Him gladly, and when they saw such teaching supported by the evidence of wonderful works of healing, whose reality not even the enemies of Jesus could gainsay, it is no wonder that they crowded round the new Teacher and willingly regarded Him as one sent from God (*cf.* Mark ii. 2, iii. 7-10; Luke vii. 16).

But Jesus Himself knew what was in the hearts of men, and understood from the first that this popularity could not last. His own idea of His mission in the world, and of the kingdom which He had come to proclaim, was, as we have seen, very different from the Messianic conceptions of His day. And as He began to make this known misunderstandings inevitably arose. The authority with which Jesus spoke was in marked contrast to the humility and reticence of His demeanour in other respects. Even when the people were willing

to acclaim Him as a king, or at least as a great prophet risen up among them, He would do nothing to encourage them. Whenever the enthusiasm of the crowd reached its height, He withdrew Himself and suffered it to die down again. More than once He charged those on whom He had wrought some work of healing to go quietly to their homes and not make the fact known, and when they would have made open confession of Him, "He suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew Him" (Mark i. 34, iii. 12). This period of the ministry was, thus, eminently the time of seed-sowing. Jesus' method was deliberately that of one who would not strive nor cry aloud. He refused to advertise Himself, and shrank from nothing so much as from making a sensation. His aim was gradually to inform and awaken a few (those that had ears to hear), and through them permeate others with the truth He had to reveal. The good seed of the kingdom was to be sown quietly, and even secretly, and left to germinate. A moral revolution was in progress, but the time of its manifestation was not yet.

Under these circumstances it was inevitable that Jesus should come into conflict with the regular religious teachers of His time. Even in Galilee, and still more in Jerusalem, these were all-powerful, and enjoyed an entire monopoly of the popular favour.

In every village and town in Palestine there was the local synagogue, the centre of its religious life, and attached to every synagogue were scribes and elders. These local teachers are to be distinguished from the "scribes sent down from Jerusalem," who were emissaries of the temple hierarchy, and from the Herodians, a dynastic party of the Herods, who afterwards combined with them, for reasons of their own, in opposition to Jesus. The familiar phrase "scribes and Pharisees" is a generic term comprising those teachers of the people who belonged to the stricter and more patriotic section of the religious community. The Pharisees, or Perushim, were the descendants of the men of the Maccabean age who had earned for themselves by their devotion the title Kasidhim or Pious. They represented the most rigid and exclusive type of Judaism, and by their devotion to the study and interpretation of the Law, had won the right to "sit in Moses' seat." The use they made of their position and privileges proved disastrous to the spiritual life of the people. In their hands the Law became a mere instrument of tyranny over the consciences of the faithful. To use the familiar phrase, they made a hedge round the Law, *i.e.* they so elaborated its precepts that a man would have to break quite a number of minor ordinances before he came near

transgressing the law itself.¹ For example, they enumerated thirty-nine works which were forbidden on the Sabbath, but in the case of each of them entered into endless discussions as to what exactly constituted the breach. Reaping and threshing were forbidden, but as to whether plucking a few ears and rubbing them in the hands were lawful or not was a matter of grave dispute. Thus the righteousness which they inculcated was of the purely legalistic type, and justified the word of Jesus to His followers, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." It was on this ground that the natural opposition of Jesus to these men made itself felt. To them religion was an affair of the forcing-house, while He lived in the freedom of God's open heaven. They made men slaves of God and of His will; He came to give them the liberty of sons. They sought to force piety into rigid and uniform moulds; He would have it grow naturally and spontaneously. No doubt it is true that it was the Jerusalem priests and the Sadducees who killed Jesus in the end, but throughout His ministry the Pharisees were His real opponents. To Him they were hypocrites, actors who wore a semblance of that

¹ On this whole subject, *cf.* Schürer, "The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," vol. ii. sec. 2, p. 96.

righteousness which they did not really possess. He rebuked them in terms of unmeasured indignation and scorn, and found in their errors and follies a convenient background against which to paint in bright free colours His picture of the kingdom of heaven.

It is to this earlier part of the active ministry of Jesus that the preaching of the kingdom mainly belongs. This preaching was partly parabolic and partly didactic. Of this latter St. Matthew's gospel gives a striking example in the collection of discourses known to us by the name of the Sermon on the Mount. This is now generally regarded not as a set speech spoken on a single occasion, but as a summary of the main points of the teaching. Nowhere else in the Gospels is the character required of members of the kingdom more vividly portrayed. It is altogether a mistake to regard this "Sermon" as a mere exposition of Christian ethic, and as in some way alien from the "Gospel." On the contrary, the religious aim and motive is dominant throughout. The Sermon also contains an implicit theology, and witnesses unmistakably to the authority of the teacher and to the place which He occupies in His own doctrine.

The "mighty works" of this period illustrate mainly the attitude of compassion which Jesus took up towards sinful and suffering humanity. The healing of the palsied man, with its remarkable testimony, "The Son of man

hath power on earth to forgive sins," the casting out of devils, the opening of blind eyes, the feeding of the hungry multitudes, and the mission of the twelve, all stand out not as mere signs and wonders, but as acts of pure compassion wrung from the very heart of Jesus. It cannot be insisted on too strongly that, even as seen through the credulous eyes of those who report them, these miracles represent a kind of minimum of power, and appear an altogether natural accompaniment of the claims which Jesus made. We would also note once more that they form in themselves no inconsiderable part of the teaching of Jesus concerning Himself. This is probably more easily comprehended by us than it could be by His contemporaries, but there is no question that these miracles do more than merely witness to extraordinary powers; they help us to see what Jesus meant when He called Himself the "Son of man," and they prepare the way for the further and final manifestation of the kingdom of heaven.

The feast of the Passover in the early part of the year A.D. 28 marks the beginning of another stage in the ministry of Jesus. From that time until the Feast of Tabernacles in the October of the same year He was occupied in extending and consolidating His work in Galilee. The scene of this work was mainly the shores of the lake of Galilee, but from there Jesus journeyed

to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, thence eastward through the district of Cæsarea Philippi, returning finally to Capernaum round the east of the lake through Decapolis. It has been noted that this journey led for the most part through the dominion of Philip, the brother of Herod Antipas, and there is good reason for the belief that it was taken in order to avoid the growing hostility of Herod on the one hand, and the importunities of the people of central Galilee on the other. It is from this time that we must date the alliance of the Pharisees and Herodians against Jesus. Enthusiasm in Galilee had reached a climax in consequence of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. This took place when the Passover was at hand and when there were present in Galilee multitudes of the devout on their way to Jerusalem. These men readily saw in the miracle the beginning of the Messianic events to which they had long looked forward.¹ Jesus, however, was not prepared to second their expectations or to meet them half-way.

¹ It is now generally agreed that the two accounts of the feeding of the multitude in Mark vi. 30-46, and Mark viii. 1-9, refer to one and the same event. In the second account the disciples are made to speak as though the event were something new in their experience, and the double account is no doubt due to the fact that there were two independent traditions on the subject. As Sanday

He will take no steps to become their leader, and continues to do His work quietly and "without observation." From this time, therefore, His popularity with the crowd began to wane and many ceased from following Him. It was not so, however, with the more intimate circle of the disciples. They had kept all these things in their hearts, and had evidently done so to some purpose. They had had more opportunity than the crowd of entering into the mind of their Master, and they were able to put together His words and His works in such fashion as to realise what it all meant. When, therefore, at Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus asked the direct question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter was ready to act as the mouthpiece of the others with the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Even then Jesus charges the disciples to tell no man what they have learned, but He recognises at the same time that the revelation has come to them from above, and that the confession resulting from it is crucial. To this confession Jesus adds His blessing and the promise that it shall be the beginning of the Christian Church. Of the meaning of this promise many and various interpreta-

points out, this would carry us back to a time earlier than the oldest stratum of Gospel narrative, if we have to allow time for the two versions to arise out of their common original.

tions have been given. It is sufficient to say here that the rock on which the Church is to be built is not Peter the man, but Peter the confessor of the Christ. Wherever there is a belief in and confession of Jesus as the Christ, there is the element out of which the Christian Church is formed. Peter's confession, being the first, is regarded as the first stone laid in the edifice of the Church. The importance attached to this by Jesus is the more remarkable, because there can be but little doubt that Peter had no very clear or true idea of what the Christhood of Jesus really meant. It was his attitude of belief rather than the content of his belief on which Jesus laid stress, and the point is important for the whole subsequent history of the Church on earth.

How little Peter really understood of the mind of Jesus is seen from his conduct when Jesus told the disciples that "He must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." Peter then took Him and began to rebuke Him, and was himself rebuked with the terrible words, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Then followed the statement that each disciple must take up

his own cross and follow Jesus if he would really save his life. The whole incident and the teaching based upon it are very significant both as regards the historical interpretation of the life of Jesus and the meaning to be attached to His work in these days. It shows us something of His own method of self-revelation, and of the grave difficulties which He had to face, and it helps us also to realise that the true understanding of Jesus can only come, not by the study of His words, but by the reproduction of His experience. What He called the cross is one thing to the man who looks at it more or less critically from the outside, and quite another thing to the man who has learnt to carry his own cross in the spirit of the Master. It is never an easy thing for a man to see as God sees, or to savour of the things of God. It comes only by the hard discipline of experience. This experience the disciples at present were scarcely prepared to face.

The process of preparation must have been greatly hastened by another event which followed closely upon the confession of Peter and is known to us as the Transfiguration. This familiar story marks yet a further stage in the self-manifestation of Jesus. It is closely paralleled by the accounts of the Baptism and the Temptation, and, like these, purports to give a certain Divine attesta-

tion to the work and claims of Jesus. There is a dramatic propriety in its occurrence just at this time, in view of the impending crisis in the ministry of Jesus. The historicity of the story has, of course, been gravely questioned, and it is often regarded as a merely symbolical or parabolic confirmation of the Divine claim of Jesus. On the other hand, there are certain considerations which make against any such view, and suggest that, however difficult it may be for us to understand the incident, it is not without historical background. These are summed up by Sanday as follows: "(1) The significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah at a time when that significance can have been but very imperfectly apprehended by the disciples, and when there was absolutely nothing to suggest such an idea to them; and (2) the Transfiguration comes within the cycle of events in regard to which a strict silence was to be preserved. This striking and peculiar stamp of genuineness was not wanting to it. We may note also (3) the random speech of St. Peter (Mark ix. 5) as a little graphic and authentic touch which had not been forgotten." On the whole, the most obvious theory is here, as often, probably the best, viz. that the event represents a vision seen by one or more of the disciples and regarded by them and accepted by Jesus as a Divine confirmation

of His mission. It may at least have served to bring home to them the imminence of that catastrophe in which they had hitherto refused to believe.

We have now reached the culminating point in the ministry of Jesus. His work in Galilee was practically finished. Henceforth the centre of interest is transferred to Jerusalem and the neighbourhood. So far he has borne His testimony among the people who sat in darkness, and the general result has been that they have shown themselves to love darkness rather than light. Jesus has contented Himself with sowing a crop of seed that, so far, has only fallen into the ground and apparently died. The harvest is not yet. His mission has been confined to simple, lowly, and needy folk, who, even if they had thoroughly understood what He was doing, would have had no power properly to make it known. His association with them was deliberate, but even in His own day was regarded as a grave drawback, and as at least an error in tactics. "He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners" was charged against Him as a grave reproach by His contemporaries. As a matter of fact, it was an exact description of His programme, and from His own point of view a justification of it. The Galilean ministry of Jesus sets the note of His whole work among mankind. The healing of the sick,

the opening of the eyes of the blind, and the preaching of the Gospel to the poor—these were the objects of His coming into the world. The way in which He carried them out, rather than the effect which He produced by them, is the best possible witness to His glory.

CHAPTER IX

THE ACTIVE MINISTRY (*continued*)

As has already been suggested, the period from the Feast of Tabernacles in A.D. 28 to the Passover of A.D. 29 marks a new development in the ministry of Jesus. It is Jerusalem and Judea rather than Galilee which form the scene of operations. The religious conditions are those of the Temple rather than of the synagogue. And the opponents of Jesus are priests and Sadducees rather than Pharisees and scribes. The records of this period in Matthew and Mark are very scanty. St. Luke is much more full, and many of the incidents in the long passage, ix. 51–xix. 28, though by no means in chronological order, may be placed here. But even this narrative needs to be filled in from the Fourth Gospel, which is a source of real historical value for the Judean ministry. Apart from the vividness and verisimilitude of his narrative, the author of this Gospel supplies a record of events which are really needed in order to account

for the crisis which followed. In the teaching of this period it is possible to discover a transference of emphasis from the kingdom of heaven in general to the Person who is regarded as its King. The Son in His unique relation to the Father and to humanity stands out now with increasing clearness, and it is this personal claim which He makes which draws upon Himself the growing hostility of the authorities. It is exceedingly difficult to visualise the conditions of this process. The sources are fragmentary and disconnected, and notes of time are almost entirely wanting. In spite of this, certain features stand out from the confusion and are noteworthy. Among these the most important is the greater prominence which His approaching death assumes in the mind and conversation of Jesus. For a full discussion of this subject the reader may be referred to a series of articles by Dr. Fairbairn which appeared in the *Expositor* for 1896. It was not only that the signs of the times were ominous, and that everything pointed to an outburst of hostility on the part of those who practically held the fate of Jesus in their hands. This much was patent to any outside observer. But there were certain deeper considerations which appealed to Jesus Himself. He had deliberately "set His face to go to Jerusalem," and He knew what He was

doing. Jerusalem had a way of stoning her prophets, and He was to be no exception to the rule. Already He had in His own mind identified the Messiah with the suffering Servant of Jehovah in the familiar prophecy, and He was prepared to sustain the rôle throughout. He had a large conception of His duty as the Saviour of the world, and He was both able and willing to proceed to the uttermost lengths to fulfil His mission. As the salvation He wrought was a greater thing than any earthly redemption, so the means by which it was to be attained were greater than those common among men. Meekness, endurance, suffering, submission, ministry—these were the means He was prepared to use, and He understood to the full what they involved. There is something wistful and pathetic in His endeavours to make this known to the dull perceptions of His disciples and their contemporaries. It is a pity that we only see these through their eyes, for we may be sure that the vision is a distorted one. Even so much, however, as they have left on record is enough to enable us to realise how deeply and continuously the mind of Jesus was possessed with the idea that it was only by the sacrifice of Himself that He could accomplish the work that had been given Him to do.

Thus it is that in the discourses given in the Fourth

Gospel Jesus represents Himself as the Life and the Light of men, as the living bread and the water of life, as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep, and as the resurrection and the life. Of the same order is the teaching given in the Synoptists, when He called little children unto Himself, and bade the rich young man sell all that he had and follow Him, and asked the disciples whether they were able to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, and told them that "the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." In spite of a certain very perceptible difference in atmosphere, these sayings all hang together, and suggest a picture which is homogeneous. The impression which Jesus thus produced on very varied minds is almost more useful to us than more detailed and definite teaching would be.

We now come to the Passover of the year A.D. 29, and with it to the closing scenes in the ministry of Jesus. The importance of these, and the effect they had on the minds of contemporary observers, may be gathered from the full and clear account of them which our four Gospels have preserved. It is as though half unconsciously the writers realised that the crisis was one of immeasurable significance. The tragedy opens with the triumphal entry

into Jerusalem. There is no reason to question the account given by the Evangelists, which indicates that this was arranged by Jesus of set purpose. It is a deliberate admission of His belief that He has come to fulfil prophecy, and a deliberate acceptance of the yoke that this involved. It served to open a good many eyes once and for all, and awakened in the fickle multitude an enthusiasm which, shallow though it was, threatened to have inconvenient consequences. But the time of retirement was now passed, and henceforth Jesus stands out to the view of the world as definitely making the claim to be the leader and Saviour of men. The effect of this is at once apparent in the increased hostility of the authorities. The Pharisees had bated nothing of their enmity, and to their ranks must now be added the priests and Sadducees. It is now that the Sanhedrin begins to take part in the opposition to Jesus. Though there were Pharisees among the members of the Sanhedrin, its policy was mainly directed by the Sadducees, to whom most of the chief priests belonged. The Sadducees rejected the traditions of the elders. They had not the keen interest in the Law which the Pharisees showed. They were politicians first and last, and they dreaded and sought to avoid anything which would justify the Romans in taking out of their hands the delegated powers with which they had been entrusted. Their name is

probably derived from Zadok, the typical high-priest and head of the priestly family. Historically they stood for the assertion of the rights of the priesthood, and were the social aristocracy of their nation. Conservative and opportunist in spirit, their antagonism to Jesus was a foregone conclusion, and they had the power to turn their hate into deeds. No time was lost in bringing this antagonism to a head. The cleansing of the Temple by Jesus (Matt. xxi. 12), which the Synoptic writers place at this period, and which may have been repeated, shows Him challenging these men on their own ground. It was not to be wondered at that they came and asked Him "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?" and they were not likely to be placated by being referred to the baptism of John and by being told that the publicans and harlots who believed in him would enter the kingdom of heaven before these righteous men who had no eyes for the righteousness of John and his teaching. This shrewd dealing with them was followed up by the parable of the householder and his vineyard, and in the servants of the householder who beat his messengers and slew his son, the opponents of Jesus were openly invited to recognise themselves. They were quick enough also to recognise the tremendous implications of the parable in regard to the speaker, and they would have made away with Him

there and then but that they feared the people. These, who had accounted John as a prophet, were not yet disposed to turn against John's Master. All the evidence in the Gospels goes to show the increasingly political character of the opposition to Jesus at this time. The questions (Matt. xxii. 15, and xxii. 41) about the tribute to Cæsar, and about David and David's Lord, were manifest traps, laid in order to embroil Jesus with the secular power. Though the time was not yet, they all helped to serve this end, and the time soon came when Jesus recognised that the crisis was at hand and that He was about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The agent in this betrayal was one of His own disciples. We do not possess the materials necessary for a full understanding of the motives which prompted Judas Iscariot to sell his Master. That the man had the possibility of great things in him goes without saying, since he was one of the select few chosen to be the companions of the Lord. Probably he was among those who, like Simon the Zealot, cherished the more carnal expectations of the Messiah's kingdom, and found it very hard to exchange them for the more spiritual idea of Jesus Himself. There was a strain of fanaticism which, when thwarted, easily became hate. This is a more probable explanation of his action than the popular one of covetousness.

Many of the discourses of Jesus in the last days, with their entire repudiation of the material idea of the kingdom, would no doubt help to bring the growing resolution of Judas to a head.

These discourses themselves raise one of the most difficult problems of the Gospels. As the end approached, Jesus evidently spent much time in speaking to His followers of the future. He had to prepare their minds for the shock of His coming departure, and to convince them of the permanence and ultimate triumph of the kingdom which He had come to found. He had also to bring home to them the startling truth that, though absent from them in the flesh, He would yet remain their very real and ever-present helper. Much of His teaching on these subjects was couched in the form of that Jewish apocalyptic which was not unfamiliar to their minds. This was strictly in accordance with the whole method of Jesus. He spoke in the language of His time. As we have already seen, however, the records show that His hearers did not altogether understand Him, and at least failed to report Him intelligibly. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that an age like our own fails to grasp to any good purpose this part of the teaching. For the critical problems involved, and for the various interpretations of them which have been given, we must refer our

readers to the many special treatises on the subject. For our present purpose it is sufficient to distinguish certain of the more important points in the narrative, and realise where the main difficulties lie. According to Professor Sanday's enumeration there are six kinds of prediction attributed to Jesus during this period. "There is (1) the prediction of His own death and resurrection. There is (2) the prediction of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. With this in the great passage Mark xiii. is directly connected (3) the prediction of the end of the world and the last judgment; (4) the discourses in John clearly predict the coming of the Paraclete as the substitute for Christ Himself; (5) in another leading passage (Mark ix. 1) a phrase is used which may be explained, though it is not usually explained, of the remarkable spread of the Christian Church from the Day of Pentecost onwards. Lastly (6) there is the explanation which is frequently given of the coming of the Son of man as a so-called 'historical coming,' a coming not exhausted by a single occasion, but repeated in the great events of history." But though all these various predictions may be distinguished in the narratives, it does not follow that they were all clearly distinguished in the minds of the narrators, or that when they spoke of them they were all necessarily referring to the same event. The one thing which seems to have

stood out clearly in their minds and in the minds of early Christians generally, was an expectation of a speedy second coming of the Lord, an expectation which they based upon His own words. It is the disappointment of this expectation which forms the real crux of the problem for modern Christians, and it has to be confessed that no satisfactory solution of it has been reached. Unquestionably the expectation itself served a great and good purpose in the early days of the Church in nerving Christian men and women to endure their trials, and in inducing among them that unworldly or other-worldly spirit which proved so great a help to their faith. There is a providential force at work here which must not be overlooked. Apart from this we may conclude either that the coming of the Son of man took place in some great catastrophe such as the destruction of Jerusalem or some great event like the Resurrection, or that it is to be identified with the coming of the Paraclete, which occupies so large a place in the discourses of the Fourth Gospel, or that it is still delayed, and that the early disciples were mistaken in their view of it as being close at hand. Even the vast amount of study expended on the subject does not yet justify a final solution, and the whole question is so obscure that it is the part of wisdom to refrain from dogmatism.

Among the closing incidents in the life of Jesus Christ the Lord's Supper must be given an important place. According to our sources Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples, and gave to the meal a special significance by attaching it to His own death, and giving to it a certain commemorative function. This appears much more clearly in the writings of St. Paul and in the practice of the early Church than in the Gospels themselves, but there is no reason to doubt the fact that the event recorded in the Gospels supplied the material for St. Paul's teaching and for the action based upon it. As was to be expected, the earliest form of our texts is the least full and explicit, but the various authorities all agree on certain main points. These are that in the course of this meal with His disciples, Jesus took the bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and said, "This is my Body;" that He took the cup, and (so the Synoptic and Pauline traditions) spoke of it as the cup of the New Covenant in the shedding of the Messiah's blood. In the Synoptic writers, again, the shedding of the blood is spoken of as redemptive. These are but the bare bones of the narrative, yet they are significant of much, and they set before us an institution. This remains even if we agree with those critics who tell us that the words, "This do in remembrance of me," are no part of the original narrative. The whole point is that the meal

is associated with the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, and we have to ask what this meant in His mind, and how it would naturally be interpreted by His followers. It would be regarded as the sacred meal following on the sacrifice, a meal which invariably signified an act of communion not only among the worshippers, but with the Deity worshipped. This communion would readily suggest itself to men who had heard Jesus speak of Himself as the bread and water of life, and would lead them to see in the sacrament a means of spiritual assimilation of their Lord. Not that this impression would arise at the moment. It is more in the nature of an after-reflection on the event, and is connected with the insistent promise of Jesus regarding His own presence with His followers for all time. In the solemn words which He used at this crisis in His fortunes, and in the solemn and evidently symbolic acts by which they were accompanied, we cannot but see a fresh effort on His part to disclose to these men something of the power and meaning of His presence among them, and to reassure them against His departure. In spite of the efforts which have been made to minimise it, St. Paul's evidence is of real importance as to the position of the Lord's Supper in the early Church. Its value is not confined to the details of the ordinance, but is of the greatest importance for estimating the place which Jesus

had come to occupy in the minds of His followers at a very early period after His death. Working backwards from this, we reach again that consciousness of Jesus concerning Himself and His mission of which the wisest of His followers is only able to give us a dim and half-realised impression.

The eucharistic meal was but one of several events which show how Jesus anticipated His death and prepared His disciples for what was to come. The author of the Fourth Gospel has gathered together a number of discourses bearing on these things, which, though they have certainly passed through the mind of their narrator, and taken something of the form of his thought, show very clearly the kind of teaching which Jesus impressed upon His followers at this time. It was His aim to reassure them, and to help them to realise that His death was not an end but a beginning, and that there was still a great future for His kingdom and for His followers. The same appears from that fine incident, recorded also by St. John, when Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, having loved His own, loved them unto the end, and "took a towel and girded himself and washed the disciples' feet," leaving them an example that they should follow His steps. This is the other sacrament, the "sacrament of service," as it has been called, which

the Christian Church would do well to celebrate as scrupulously as she has celebrated the sacrament of communion. It sets forth in a beautiful and unmistakable fashion the real spirit of Christianity, the spirit which Jesus inculcated upon His followers, and of which He was Himself the perfect embodiment.

NOTE.—The chronology of the Lord's Supper and of the death of Jesus offers one of the most complex problems in New Testament criticism. The facts are briefly these. The Synoptic writers appear to identify the Lord's Supper with the paschal meal, and give the time of it as the evening before the Crucifixion, which took place on a Friday. St. John, however, places the Last Supper before the Passover, and makes the Crucifixion take place on the 14th of the month Nisan. There is also a discrepancy as to the time of day at which the Crucifixion took place. St. Mark (xv. 25) makes it the third hour (*i.e.* 9 A.M.); St. John (xix. 14) says that the trial was not over by the sixth hour (noon), and therefore the Crucifixion was still later. There are indications in the Synoptists themselves which are inconsistent with the belief that the Crucifixion took place at the time of the Passover, and would therefore go to support the chronology of the Fourth Gospel. But with no more than our existing materials before us it is

perhaps safest to follow the order of St. Mark. For a discussion of the whole subject reference may be made to the article on New Testament Chronology in Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," and to "Some New Testament Problems" by A. Wright, p. 147 ff.

CHAPTER X

THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF JESUS

As the end drew near Jesus' anticipation of His death became more acute. In that sad scene which we call the agony in the garden of Gethsemane He faced the dread possibility before Him. The real struggle was then, when He braced Himself to drink His cup, rather than in the hour and article of His suffering. Immediately after the agony, Judas, who had already agreed with certain members of the Sanhedrin that he would help them to take Jesus quietly, came at the head of a mixed party of Temple police, soldiers, and lookers on, and delivered Jesus up to His enemies. It is important to note that it was at the instance of the ecclesiastical authorities that Jesus was apprehended. His offence was against them and their traditions, and it is clear from the Gospel narrative that they had some difficulty in making His guilt clear to the Roman authority. It was the policy of Rome to be tolerant in matters of religion, and although Judæa was a

portion of a Roman province, and administered by a Roman official, in religious matters power still remained in the hands of the native ecclesiastical authorities. They could try a cause and punish offenders in all cases save when the capital sentence was passed. In that event the case had to be re-tried before the Roman governor, and if the sentence were sustained he was responsible for carrying it out. This explains the procedure in the case of Jesus Christ. He was first tried and condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities, and then brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, that the sentence of death passed on Him might be confirmed and carried out.

According to the rather confused accounts in the four Gospels, the ecclesiastical trial of Jesus was carried on in an informal and even irregular fashion. The prisoner was first taken before Annas, an ex-high-priest and father-in-law of the reigning high-priest, Caiaphas. As the real head of the hierarchy, though no longer holding the titular position, Annas was evidently a prime mover in the arrest of Jesus, and probably had his own reasons for wishing to subject Him to a private and informal cross-examination. While this was going on the Sanhedrin was hastily summoned at the house of Caiaphas. The time was about midnight, and the whole of the proceedings hasty and informal. It would

seem to show that the accusers of Jesus were by no means sure of their ground, or that the authorities still, as on former occasions, feared the multitude because they accounted Him a prophet. The trial itself, if we may judge from the accounts before us, was altogether irregular. There was no attempt made to formulate a charge, or even to call witnesses on both sides. The judges who were the members of the Sanhedrin interrogated Jesus with regard to His acts and teaching, and very easily convicted Him of what they called blasphemy. Something more was necessary, however, if the matter was to go any further, and Jesus brought under the Roman jurisdiction. His enemies from the first were anxious to silence Him for ever, and to this end they sought to obtain a charge of conspiracy against Cæsar. To prove that Jesus was seeking to make Himself the head of a revolutionary party would do all they needed. According to the Gospel story, suborned witnesses were easily found, who based the necessary charge on a misunderstanding of the words which Jesus had used in regard to the Temple. It was not altogether satisfactory, however, and the high-priest asked Jesus point blank, "Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." To this the answer came at once, "I am, and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of

power and coming in the clouds of heaven." The great confession was lost upon the judges, and served only to bring to a head their long-gathering hate. They turned on Jesus with the ferocity of animals, smote and spat upon Him whom they were there to judge. The so-called trial ended in confusion, and the majority judged Jesus worthy of death.

Meanwhile Jesus had not been altogether forsaken by His disciples. Though they had fled in the first panic of the arrest, Peter, and probably others with him, had followed Jesus at a distance, and mingling with the crowd, waited in the court of the high-priest's house to hear how matters were going on. While waiting, Peter was challenged once and again as a manifest Galilean, and accused of being one of the companions of Jesus. The man was terrified, and at first prevaricated, and then with all the excitement of an Oriental denied with oaths that he knew anything of Jesus. Just at that moment a cock crowed, and Peter, remembering the half-prophetic words of Jesus, went out weeping bitterly.

When the next day dawned, a deputation of priests and elders, representing the Sanhedrin, carried Jesus a prisoner before the Roman governor, Pilate. The charge they preferred was skilfully concocted. "We found this man perverting our nation, and for-

bidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." Pilate was shrewd enough to doubt their zeal for Cæsar, and probably realised from the first that they were moved by religious fanaticism. He knew the turbulent kind of folk he had to deal with, and moved warily. The prisoner before him, in His simple Galilean dress, worn out with the strain through which He had passed, and bearing the marks of the cruel treatment of His enemies, did not seem very formidable, and certainly did not look like a king. It was with a kind of irony, therefore, that he asked, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied simply, "Thou sayest." There was no defiance of Cæsar in such an answer, and Pilate wished for something more explicit. He has a rough sense of justice, and can see no evidence of the serious crime of rebellion. The accusers of Jesus repeat the charge and magnify it, but when Jesus is asked to answer them He maintains a silence which puzzles and surprises His judge. It looked as though he would set Him free, when just then the proceedings are interrupted by the clamour of the crowd for the release of a prisoner, according to time-honoured custom, at the Passover. To Pilate this presented a way out of his difficulty. He knew that Jesus was popular with the crowd, and it was with a sense of gracious concession that he asked,

“Shall I, then, release unto you your king?” At the moment the people might have consented, but the priests, their leaders, passed round the word that the right man to ask for was Barabbas, a real patriot, while Jesus was a lawbreaker and blasphemer. To Pilate they said, “If thou release this man thou art not Cæsar’s friend,” and they knew the power of their words. The crowd then clamoured for the release of Barabbas, and when Pilate asked them what he should do with Jesus their king, they cried, “Away with him! Crucify him!” The Roman was more puzzled than ever. If Jesus were really an enemy of Rome, why in the world should the crowd want His death, and he asked them, “What crime has he committed?” That was a question which no one could answer, and priests and people alike covered their confusion in a wild clamour, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Half frightened and half ashamed, Pilate solemnly washed his hands of responsibility, and then handed Jesus over to the guard, condemned to be put to death by crucifixion. His action was simply a cowardly concession to the violence of the mob. Through all this Jesus remained outwardly calm. For Him the bitterness of death was passed already. He quietly submitted Himself to the soldiers when, according to the brutal custom, they scourged Him as a preliminary to the execution. They added, too, insult to the injury,

mocking His weakness. They put on Him a purple robe, and plaited a crown of some thorny shrub for His head, and put a reed for sceptre in His hand. Then, after making feigned obeisance to Him, they beat Him with His own sceptre, and spat in His face. After this cruel horseplay they took Jesus to the place of execution, along with two robbers condemned to suffer the same fate. It was the custom that the criminal, on this his last journey, should carry at least part of the instrument of torture on which he was to die. The load proved too much for Jesus, and He sank under the weight of it. The soldiers then impressed a passer-by to bear the burden, and his name has been handed down—one Simon of Cyrene. Arrived at the rising ground outside the city called the "place of a skull," the soldiers, before putting up the cross, offered Jesus drugged wine as a narcotic. This He refused, as though willing to bear to the uttermost all that came upon Him. He was then nailed to the cross by His hands and feet, and the cross having been raised, He was left hanging there to die. Above His head was the inscription, "The King of the Jews." The soldiers sat round waiting for the end, and occupied the time by casting lots for the clothes of the victims, which were their perquisites. In addition to the soldiers a considerable crowd gathered. Some were priests and elders come to see their work com-

pleted, and others passers-by interested in the scene, while in the distance was a group of women, friends of Jesus. There were not wanting those who mocked the victim with His helplessness and spent the time in ribald jesting. It was about nine in the morning when the dread scene began, and as the day wore on men tired of the spectacle, and Jesus was left almost alone with His guards, and the little group of agonised friends. To these the whole earth seemed darkened by the tragedy, and the very heavens to veil themselves. Once and again Jesus spoke, and fragments of His words have come down to us. But at last, long after midday, with a great and bitter cry He yielded up His spirit. Through all the long agony no hand was stretched out to help Him, and the heavens above were silent. Such was His demeanour, however, and such the manner of His passing, that when all was over the captain of the soldiers cried, "Truly this man was a Son of God."

The body of Jesus was left hanging on the cross till the evening, and would have remained there in all probability till the Sabbath was over, had not one Joseph of Arimathæa asked Pilate's permission to remove it. Pilate first made inquiry to see if He were really dead, and then gave permission for the burial. Joseph and the women took the body of Jesus down from the cross, and with the due rites buried it in a rock tomb, the

entrance to which they closed with a great boulder of stone.

Such, in simplest outline, is the story of the greatest event in the history of the world. There is always something majestic about the death of a great man, and the death of Jesus was no exception. But it was not with Him as with other men, that His death put a period to His earthly activities and closed His career for ever. Certain results dated from it, and it must be looked at in the light of them if it is to be understood and its place in history fully realised. As we have seen already, Jesus Himself anticipated His death in a way which was, to say the least of it, unusual. It was not merely that He feared that His teaching would bring Him into conflict with the authorities and so imperil His life. It was not, in other words, that He looked forward to His martyrdom as a most probable consequence of His actions. He rather regarded His death by violent means as a necessary part of the work He came into the world to do, as a consummation without which that work would have been left incomplete. The language He used in regard to it was the language of sacrifice, made intelligible enough to His hearers, and consecrated by generations of usage. This conclusion cannot be altogether evaded by the suggestion that His followers read these ideas into the event in retrospect. It

only makes the mystery deeper, for it is impossible to give any reason why they should have done so apart from the interpretation of His work and person derived from Jesus Himself. The sequel showed that the death of Jesus was pivotal to the whole system of His teaching and life. In the preaching of the first apostles of the Church it occupies an altogether disproportionate place. They spoke of His death not as a martyrdom, still less as a cruel and bitter end to all the hopes they had founded upon Him, but as His own voluntary act, an act by which the whole human race was to be benefited for all time. In the eyes of the first Christians there was a moral splendour and a moral value about the death of Jesus which made it the transcendent act in His career. The cross on which He died had been regarded hitherto as a symbol of all that was most cruel and shameful; the fact that He had died upon it lifted it at once into a new category, and it became the symbol instead of a life-giving and beneficent power. It was in the death of Jesus that His saving activity was demonstrated, and it gave to Him, and to all those who by faith participated in it, an irresistible power over man's ancient enemy, sin. The secret of the power of this idea of a sacrificial death for sin over the human heart is one of the mysteries of psychology, and for the moment we are not concerned to seek an explanation of

it. But we are concerned with the fact itself. It is of immense importance in determining the interpretation put upon Jesus Christ by those who were nearest to Him in point of time, and therefore we may presume also of understanding. Reading back from their point of view, we are forced to the conclusion that they regarded Him as one who had an unique right of representing God to man, who spake with authority in God's name, and who stood by His very nature in close and intimate connection with the whole human race. His voluntary death upon the cross was regarded as in some way a death in behalf of men. It was a supreme manifestation of the sinfulness of sin, of the love of God, and of the possibility of salvation through sacrifice. To this interpretation the religious ideas of the Jewish people naturally lent themselves, and it was not surprising perhaps that it should find vogue amongst them. But it spread rapidly far beyond the confines of Judaism, and found an answering echo in human hearts everywhere. It has been among the most moving and potent of religious forces. That it was no more than a theory invented by the excited imaginations of the disciples, and improved upon and formulated by St. Paul, is frankly incredible. Its origin is to be traced to the consciousness of Jesus Christ, and its power to the facts of His nature—that He was both Son of God and Son of man.

CHAPTER XI

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

THE burial of Jesus in Joseph's tomb was probably not intended to be final. It was rather a hurried and temporary disposal of His body until the Sabbath should be over and there should be a better opportunity of paying to it the last sad rites. It was probably in view of this that after the Sabbath, quite early in the morning, some of the women friends of Jesus made their way to His tomb, that they might anoint the body and prepare it in due form for its final resting-place. On arrival at the grave, they found the stone rolled away from the entrance and the body of Jesus vanished. The grave-clothes were there, and beside them sat a youth in white raiment whom they took for an angel, and who told them that Jesus had risen, and that they were to inform the disciples of the fact. Terrified and perplexed, the women ran to the disciples with the news, and these in turn hastened to the tomb to prove it for themselves. Shortly afterwards Jesus

appeared to Mary and then to the disciples. Once and again He visited them, assured them that He was indeed risen from the dead, and commissioned them to go forth and preach in His name to all the world. According to the accounts before us, he remained with them some forty days until "he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight."

In this bare outline of the story there is material enough for wonder and surmise. We have purposely refrained from giving the details of the narrative, because the sources are not agreed upon them. It is useless to shut our eyes to the fact that the discrepancies between them are numerous and serious. Briefly, there are discrepancies in regard to the time at which the women visited the sepulchre, and in regard to the number of the women themselves, in regard to what was seen at the sepulchre, and in regard to the instructions given to the women and by them to the disciples. Also there are serious differences in the Gospel accounts of the appearances of the risen Jesus to His disciples. The scene of these appearances is sometimes given as Galilee and sometimes as Jerusalem. Matthew and Mark throw the stress on Galilee, while Luke and John xx. are based on appearances in Jerusalem. All the sources agree that the disciples were in Jerusalem on the Resurrection morning. When all these points are taken

into account they present us with a problem of extreme difficulty and complexity, but they do not warrant us in denying the fact of the Resurrection altogether, and relegating the accounts of it to the realm of myth. These very differences show underlying them an independent knowledge of the event on the part of *bona-fide* reporters. In the absence of the trained scientific observer, full weight has to be given to this point.

It has also to be remembered that the strongest evidence for the fact of the Resurrection is to be found outside the Gospel narratives. In his first letter to the Corinthians (chap. xv.) St. Paul speaks of the Resurrection as being in his belief, and in that of Christians generally, the very foundation of their faith, and he enumerates in attestation of the fact the appearances of the risen Jesus of which he knows—viz. to Peter, to the twelve, to a body of more than five hundred disciples, to James, and to “all the apostles.” There can be no question as to the value of St. Paul as a witness—not so much to the fact, perhaps, but to the strong conviction of the contemporaries of Jesus that He had risen from the grave and was alive for evermore. Even a critic like Schmiedel admits that “the historian who will have it that the alleged appearances are due merely to legend or to invention must deny not only

the genuineness of the Pauline epistles, but also the historicity of Jesus altogether." It may not be possible to give an exact and detailed description of the event itself, but that "something happened" at the grave in the garden may be taken as an indisputable fact. It must also be admitted that that "something" was of a nature to convince the disciples of Jesus that He had risen from the dead, to rouse them from the despair into which His crucifixion had thrown them, and to send them forth upon their mission, ready to stake their very existence on the belief that He was alive for evermore.

It must be confessed that the real objection to the story of the Resurrection of Jesus is not to be found in the weakness of the historical argument but in the modern objection to the miracle which the story involves. Historically the account given in the Bible is sufficient for all practical purposes, and would never have been questioned had it referred to some everyday event. It is the character of the event itself, rather than the account of it, which creates the difficulty. Accepted as it stands it involves a miracle. Hence the necessity of trying to explain it away. It is this consideration which has given rise to the numerous attempts to account for the story on more or less naturalistic grounds. It has been urged, for instance,

that the death of Jesus was only a swoon, and that He recovered and appeared again among His friends really alive. Or it has been argued that His body was stolen by Joseph of Arimathæa, and the report of His resurrection spread abroad—the empty tomb being shown as proof. Hypotheses such as these, however, have now been frankly abandoned. There is nothing whatever in our sources to justify them, and they really raise more difficulties than they settle. Much more persistent and widespread is what is called the vision hypothesis. This presupposes a certain expectation of the Resurrection on the part of the disciples, an expectation which was fostered and encouraged by their extreme disappointment at the death of Jesus. Given, it is said, a number of men in this grief-stricken and excited condition, and given on their part a keen desire and even expectation that their loved Master would appear to them again, and you have all the conditions which make the vision of the risen Lord not only possible but even psychologically probable. This is no doubt true, given the necessary conditions. But the weak point of the argument is just here. There is nothing in the narrative to indicate that there was on the part of the disciples this lively hope and expectation that Jesus would rise again. However, such a condition of enthusiastic anticipation would require time for its growth

and realisation, and there is no part of the Gospel tradition which is more persistent than that of the "third day." Nor is there any trace in our sources of this kind of subjective hallucination in the appearance which Jesus made to His friends. Such an explanation, again, is not adequate to the facts before us, and only serves to increase our difficulties. Neither fraud nor illusion are sufficient to account for those vast and far-reaching events which are based on the belief that Jesus rose from the dead.

It should be easily apparent that this belief cannot be dissociated from our general interpretation of the life and teaching of Jesus. If it stood by itself, an isolated phenomenon in the life of a great teacher, it would be miraculous indeed, and practically inexplicable. But coming as it does, as the culmination of a long series of events all of which point to the same conclusion, there is at least a strong balance of probability in favour of the usual interpretation. It must not be forgotten also that Jesus Christ was morally no ordinary man. The claims which He made in regard to His relationship both to man and God were such as to lift Him into a category by Himself, and all the accounts given of Him need to be viewed in the light of these claims. He could have said, in a sense that was far wider than any that the

poet could have used, *Non omnis moriar*, and His victory over death, and the assurance of an eternal life thus given in His own person, were but the natural sequence of His whole career. So, again, the Resurrection of Jesus cannot be separated from the results which have been founded upon it in history. As has already been pointed out, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to account for these on the basis either of fraud or illusion. Experience shows that things do not happen in that way. The pyramid is not balanced on its apex. That which caused the Christian Church, and overthrew the Empire of Rome, and turned the world upside down, must have been in itself great enough and powerful enough to originate these events. The memory which Jesus left to His disciples, and the inspiration of His teaching, were moving enough, no doubt. But it was not these things which drove them out to preach and suffer in His name. It was the sense that He was not dead, but alive, an ever-present power in and with His followers, that gave them heart and hope. St. Paul's testimony on this point is explicit. It was based first on his own experience, and then on the logic of that experience as reflection discovered it and saw it exemplified in others. Faith working upon the fact proved it by demonstrating its moral power over the human heart.

All this, of course, does not help us to understand the mystery surrounding the Resurrection appearances of Jesus. In what corporeal form He showed Himself to His disciples we shall probably never be able to understand. "It was sown a natural body, it was raised a spiritual body," is probably the best possible commentary on the accounts as we have them. Beyond that it is useless to inquire, and one speculation has no more value than another. But it is not without importance to remember that the whole New Testament view of the event is based on a materialistic conception of things which in these days we have practically outgrown. No doubt St. Paul repudiated this view, and to his mind resurrection was quite conceivable apart from any physical resuscitation. There is good reason for concluding that the purely spiritual view was the earlier, and that in the later history, as well as in the creeds of the Church, we see the popular materialistic idea gradually taking its place. The modern student of the subject will not go very far astray in returning to the more primitive tradition. The narrative of the journey to Emmaus shows that a certain moral preparation was required in order to see the risen Jesus. His appearance to the disciples involved a spiritual experience which was fruitful indeed, and must be judged by its results.

It is often contended that the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the foundation of the Christian religion, and that belief in it is *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*. So at least St. Paul taught, and it is hard to conceive of a Christianity whose Christ is dead. It should be clearly understood, however, that the fact does not depend on the literal accuracy of every statement made about it in the Gospels. Our religion does not compel us to accept all the primitive ideas as to its origin, and it is matter for thankfulness that modern critical inquiries have forced us to discover foundations of the faith that are capable of verification in experience and that will stand all the tests we need apply to them. History shows us at least this, that the grounds of belief in the Resurrection which the early Church found were sufficient for those days. The grounds of our belief are also sufficient for us, though not necessarily the same as theirs. As Bishop Westcott has said :¹ "The Resurrection was and is an abiding fact. It was the beginning of a new and living relation between the Lord and His people. He came to them while He went. The idea may be expressed by saying that the apostolic conception of the Resurrection is rather 'the Lord lives,' than 'the Lord was raised.' This important truth is entirely overlooked by critics who lay stress on the point that

¹ "The Gospel of the Resurrection," p. 294.

‘there was no eye-witness of the Resurrection.’ It is impossible to see what we should have gained by the testimony of such a witness, or what he could have established which was not established by the intercourse of the living Lord with His disciples. That which had to be made clear as to Christ was the reality of His new life. This was first established for the apostles by their complete experience of the continuity of His manifestation to them, and for the Church in all ages through the signs of His power. And it is here that the ‘proof’ of the Resurrection is to be found. Christ lives, for He works still.”

CHAPTER XII

THE CHARACTER AND WORK OF JESUS

No attempt to sum up the impression made by Jesus Christ can be successful or approach the truth which does not recognise its primarily ethical quality. Inadequate as are our materials for the study of the life of Jesus, and difficult as it is to make use of them, it has yet to be confessed that they provide a background against which the moral and spiritual personality of Jesus stands out clear and sharp. It is not merely that He followed the prophets in preaching a "better righteousness." He showed Himself greater than the prophets by exemplifying this righteousness in His own person. That is why the person of Jesus is a greater thing than His teaching or His work. The Christian Church has shown her sense of the importance of this by laying stress on the doctrine of His sinlessness, but this purely dogmatic interpretation must not be allowed to blind us to the facts behind it. The modern tendency is to lay stress on the holiness rather than on the

sinlessness of Jesus. The one involves the other. But the character of Jesus must be studied without preconceptions. He was very man, and played His part on the arena of a full human life. He was tempted like as we are, but did not yield to temptation as we do. In contradiction to a generally received opinion, the dominant feature in His character was a certain strength and authoritativeness. He showed a mastery of men and of truth that seemed a very strange thing in an age of pedants and imitators. There was about Him an entire absence of fear or even of hesitation. He went on His course steadfastly, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, and that is why men have so willingly made Him their guide. Then His strength of will meant also strength of mind. For though he was an idealist, He was without illusions. He understood what His mission meant, and was prepared to pay the inevitable price of His work. He was content that God's ways should be His own: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." So it came about that He did not argue so much as teach. His process was intuitive, and the success of it is best judged by the fact that men were only too ready to take Him at His word. They recognised that here was one who at least had a right to speak. But along with this strength there was in Jesus a singular tenderness. It is often said that He combined in Himself the

masculine and the feminine as no other character has ever done. The explanation leaves something to be desired, for there was a strength even in the tenderness of Jesus that was greater than that of women. In His attitude towards men He was the embodiment of what we call love. But with Him love was neither blind nor soft. He loved men though He knew what was in them. His knowledge of their greatness and of their possibilities made Him condemn their sins and rebuke their follies in the most unmistakable terms. With all His sanity of judgment He never ceased to hope, and He never compromised with evil. By us conduct and duty are seen in a kind of moral haze, but to His eyes all the outlines were sharp and clear. So His love was more than an easy-going good nature. The note of sacrifice was in it from the first, and this gave it both pith and power. It was entirely without that alloy of selfishness which so often taints human love even at its best. Loving men, Jesus loved them to the uttermost, and gave Himself for their salvation.

This calm estimate of His work and of its consequences was altogether of a piece with His sanity and serenity of outlook upon life in general. In the records of His career there are moments of deep disturbance when His whole soul is convulsed with an agony of protest. But there are a meaning and dignity about

these crises that lift them far above the fears and worries of our common human nature. Jesus was absolutely without worry. His trust in God was profound, and His perspective was so true that He always saw this life *sub specie eternitatis*, and was able to put their true values upon things. He had no hesitation in rebuking the short-sightedness of the men who saw otherwise. He came, indeed, to open their eyes, and the spirit of His simple faith in God's goodness and providence is one that all His followers may well seek to catch. Jesus' estimate of moral values was of the same order as His estimate of the spiritual. Mere surface goodness was worth nothing in His eyes. If it acted as a cloak to unrighteousness, it was an altogether mischievous thing. He had the single eye to some purpose, for He was able to see not only the shams of the outside, but that inner worth and possibility in imperfection to which others were wholly blind. "The soul of goodness in things evil" was a very positive reality to Jesus Christ. It was this power of vision, at once deep and wide, which made possible the meekness and humility of Jesus. If, as Pascal says, He was "magnificent in His humiliation," it was because His character was so complete and well rounded that He could be independent of ordinary human judgments. To us there is always a strain of weakness in these minor and self-effacing

virtues, because with us character is so invariably one-sided. The meekness of Jesus was no exaggeration, it was simply a consequence of His personality. His whole Being on earth was a surrender, a stooping, and the thing was beautiful in Him because natural.

Thus there is some show of reason in attributing to Jesus the characteristics of those apparently opposite forms of temperament, the ascetic and the æsthetic. There were in Him Hellenic elements as well as Hebraic. He had affinities with Stoic and with Epicurean. But the mere mention of these names shows how impossible it is to label Him with any of the conventional titles. His asceticism was not that of the fanatics of His own or any other age. It was moral and spiritual rather than ceremonial. It governed not so much His actions as His attitude to life. It made Him the Man of Sorrows, the servant and friend of His people, but it never drove Him into an abandonment of the world, nor compelled Him to count anything that God had made common or unclean. The spirit of sacrifice and self-denial came to Him as a natural condition of His being and work, and was not adopted as a form of spiritual gymnastic. He denied Himself for the sake of others, and not in order to perfect His own religious development. So his self-sacrifice was entirely compatible with a free and joyous outlook upon life.

To His mind the whole universe is beautiful and eloquent. He is quick to note the glad and hopeful side, both in nature and in humanity. These things, however, are all subordinate to the main purpose of His being and work. This is, in a word, to glorify the Father in heaven, to take account of and to make real to men that divine and spiritual side of things which is too easily overlooked. This is His real business, and the pursuit of this sets Him apart from all others on this earth. He sees things which they cannot see, and in the midst of the crowd He stands solitary and apart. "Here indeed is the pathos of the character of Jesus; yet here also we approach the source of His strength. It was in this detachment of nature, this isolation of the inner life, that Jesus found His communion with the life of God. At this point His ethics melt into His religion. The crowd press round Him, and He serves them gladly, and then it seems as if His nature demanded solitude for the refreshment of His faith. The tide of the Spirit ebbs from Him in the throng, and when He goes apart He is least alone, because the Father is with Him. Thus, from utterance to silence, from giving to receiving, from society to solitude, the rhythm of His nature moves: and the power which is spent in service is renewed in isolation. He is able to bear the crosses of others because He bears His own.

He can be of use to men because He can do without men. He is ethically effective because He is spiritually free. He is able to save because He is strong to suffer. His sympathy and his solitude are both alike the instruments of His strength.”¹ This solitariness of Jesus takes Him out of all human categories, and makes it impossible to judge Him by human standards. It is the hall-mark of His divinity. In His relation to the men and women who were His contemporaries, as well as in His relation to the Father in heaven, He stands altogether alone.

The character of Jesus Christ, and the estimate formed of Him by His followers, determined His work in the early days of the Church. The Christian religion is pre-eminently the religion of a Person. St. Paul’s confession, “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him so no more,” became the guiding principle of Christian thought on the subject. In their knowledge of Jesus Christ, and in their relationship to Him, men found an inspiration and a force, which constituted for them a new life, and which made them new men. The promise of Jesus, that He would draw all men unto Himself, found a very real fulfilment. In Him, rather than in His teaching, there was an attraction which

¹ Peabody, “Jesus Christ and the Christian Character,” p. 69.

became irresistible. Thus the relation of Jesus to His early followers was personal, and His unique power is seen in the fact that He did not merely appeal to the generation to which they belonged, but has continued to satisfy the highest needs of men of all races and climes.

To discuss this subject at length would be to write a history of the Christian Church. All that we can attempt to do here is to indicate very briefly the way in which history justifies the claims made on behalf of Jesus, and carries on the work which He began. The story of the work of Jesus Christ in history leads us out far beyond the range of the Christian Church. His influence is not confined to any institution, but goes deeper, and is to be discovered in many places which the Church of the period refuses to own. The process followed is that of a development. In His earthly life Jesus dealt with principles which were but half understood by the men who listened to Him, and needed time for their explication. He cast them among humanity as seed is cast into the ground, and they have been growing ever since. But His teaching was closely bound up with His own Person, and it is to the power of His Person that the vitality of the teaching is mainly due. The Gospels are exceedingly frank in portraying the purely human side of the

personality of Jesus. The disciples lived with Him in ordinary human relations, and yet He produced on them an impression which manifested itself in the kind of doctrine concerning Him, which we find in the discourses in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters of St. Paul. It is very easy to exaggerate the gulf between the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels and the Christ of the early Church. As a matter of fact, the one is the legitimate consequence of the other, and represents the inevitable result of any reflective process which has for its foundation the life and teaching of the Master. The first Apostles kept close to the historic facts, but they were bound to find an expression for the faith that grew out of them. We shall never be able fully to explain how it was that this Jesus, with whom they had lived on terms of ordinary human companionship, came to be regarded by them as the Lord of all, and as having for them and for all men the religious value of God. But we cannot evade the fact that they found in His own teaching, and in His own presentation of His claims, that which justified them in seeing in Him the Saviour of the world, and in describing the salvation which He brought in Messianic terms. He was to them the mediator of a new idea of God, and of a new redemptive relationship between God and the

world. They could scarcely find words strong enough in which to describe His glory and His power. They were conscious not merely of sacred memories which gathered round Him, but of an experience of His presence with them, and activity on their behalf, which they could not but regard as real, and the effects of which were unmistakable. The New Testament shows us this reflective process assuming various forms, and working along parallel lines in different directions. Of these we may distinguish the Fourth Gospel and the whole Johannine literature, the Pauline Epistles, the Petrine tradition, and the tradition represented by the Epistle to the Hebrews. Each of these represents an individual point of view, but all of them alike point back to the same source, and are legitimate developments from it. Their work is not mere doctrinal speculation; it is rather the natural effort to explain certain given facts.

Not the least remarkable feature of the Apostolic reflection upon the work and Person of Jesus, is the way in which it accepts His own interpretation of His Messianic work. To us this is a comparatively easy thing, and it requires some effort of the imagination to realise how hard it must have been for men, brought up amid the average Jewish thought on this subject, to adopt a point of view concerning it so alien as that of

Jesus. It is now generally admitted¹ that while Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, He gave an entirely new connotation to the title. But this presented little or no difficulty to the Apostles, after the Resurrection. They accepted Him on His own terms, and went on to expound Him to others on lines which He had Himself laid down. In preaching Him to Gentiles as well as to Jews, and in regarding Him as the Lord and Saviour of mankind, they were influenced, no doubt, by the circumstances and conditions of their time. This is abundantly evidenced by the history of the early Church, but it does not affect the fact that the Person of Jesus, as they conceived Him, justified them in their own eyes in making these wide-reaching claims on His behalf. The process which they thus began has been carried on all through the ages. All the great controversies which have raged round the Person of Jesus Christ have not been able to obscure His message or diminish His power over the hearts of men. He speaks to-day, as He spoke long ages ago, through the voice of a living religious experience. As men look, not back to Him as they are often urged to do, but up to Him, they find the beginning of a new life and the inspiration to a nobler service. The memory of His words and the example of His deeds remain an undying source of

¹ Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Messianische Bewusstsein Jesu*.

inspiration. But the true servant of Christ finds more in Him than this, precious and effective though it is. His living presence with the soul of man has become in the case of multitudes an experience which cannot be gainsaid. In the eyes of the Apostles Jesus claimed to fulfil the functions of the Old Testament Messiah, to judge the world, to forgive sins, and to be the Lord of life and death. These are the prerogatives of God Himself, and yet the modern Christian sees no incongruity in granting the claim. That the claim should be contested is natural enough, and the appeal in proof of it is still, as it was in the early days, to the experience of those who have known Christ for themselves, and to the effect which He has produced in and through them. As Von Dobschütz says,¹ "Christianity possessed what the speculations of Neo-platonism lacked—the sure historical basis of Jesus Christ's Person. Nor was it to a higher moral teaching that Christianity owed its victory. Stoicism and Neo-platonism, after all, produced moral thoughts of great beauty and purity, thoughts which are more imposing to superficial contemplation than the simple commandments of Christianity. Yet neither of them could enable artisans and old women to lead a truly philosophical life. Christianity could and did: the apologists point triumphantly to the realisation

¹ "Christian Life in the Primitive Church," Eng. trans., p. 379.

of the moral ideal among Christians of every standing. That was due to the power which issued from Jesus Christ and actually transformed men. The certainty and confidence of faith based on Him, with reliance on God's grace in Jesus Christ, begot in Christians a matchless delight in doing good. Joy in good was more potent than abhorrence of evil. In the midst of an old and dying world, this new world springs up with the note of victory running through it."

Controversy round the Person of Jesus Christ has not yet ceased. In some respects it is keener than ever, and its persistence is the best possible testimony to His power and to the reality of His work. There are signs, however, amid all the strife, of a certain consensus of opinion on the main point. Even extreme critics of the historicity of the New Testament records do not withhold their homage to the Person of Jesus. This stands out above all other factors in shaping the Christian religion and in giving to it life and power. In a sense which is true of no other personality in history, Jesus Christ still lives and still speaks to the hearts of men. The truth of His message each man may test for himself, not by the process of historical inquiry and criticism alone, but by those deeper and more subtle processes, obedience and faith. There is a charm about His demeanour and a simplicity about

His words that will always appeal to the student. But to know Him in all His power and beauty it is necessary to become not merely a student, but a disciple. To the inner Sanctuary of His presence there is only one password—My Lord and my God.

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